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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 496. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 2ND, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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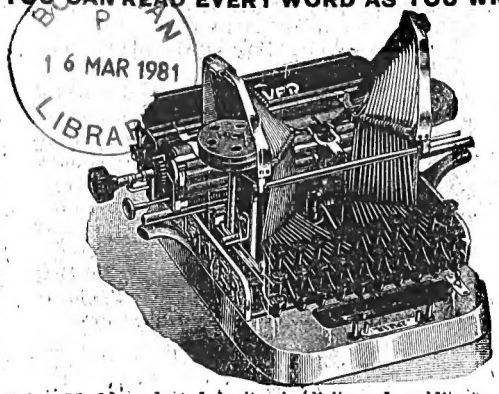

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 496. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending July 2nd, 1898.

THE LOVE OF MEN.

A STORY OF WEST AFRICA.

I.

BANG! crash! and out of the cook-house belonging to a certain bungalow in Accra, inhabited by Dick Lockhart and Tom Willoughby, shot Friday, the cook, followed by an apparition of "size eight" and one leg of a pair of duck trousers.

"There! take that, you black-faced scoundrel!" exclaimed an angry voice, with astonishing energy for the coast, "and don't let me set eyes on you again in a hurry if you value your skin."

Friday pulled a grimace, and rubbed himself soothingly, for the remark had been made in a most impressive manner; then he walked away.

"Hallo! what's up?" asked another voice, and a man's head and shoulders, in dishabille, appeared through a window of the bungalow.

"What's up, indeed?" exclaimed Tom Willoughby, displaying the rest of the duck suit; "why, the very deuce. I've just found that ugly scoundrel, Friday, sound asleep, without having made the faintest attempt to prepare the dinner, and here it's six o'clock, and we asked Fulwell and Eyre to come at half-past," and he fumed and strutted like a true Britisher.

"Never mind," replied Dick, the owner of the head and shoulders, in a cheery voice. "We'll have to cook the dinner ourselves, that's all; I'll be ready in a jiffy," and he disappeared.

Tom did not feel very reassured, and he knocked two small black boys' heads together, who happened to be onlookers, as a let off to his feelings. He cheered up somewhat, however, when Dick appeared in a spotless suit, and a twinkle in his blue eyes, and set to work.

"Aprons first, then soup," said he, "and then work for dear life."

"Are aprons a kind of caviar?" asked Tom wickedly.

"No, silly—to keep your togs clean; here, take this," and he threw one across the table at him. "Now for it—first comes soup; well that of course only wants boiling, with a little salt and pepper thrown in. You can do that while I get to the fish."

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Of course I do. It's as simple as A. B. C.; you simply dip it in something sticky, then in bread crumbs, then fry it. Look slippy with that soup while I get it ready. Joints and entrées must be tinned things."

The soup was completed, and looked—well, dubious.

The fish also was completed, and looked—well, more dubious, but they put it aside, and hoped for the best.

"Can you make any sweets?" asked Tom.

"No, that I can't," was the prompt reply.

"Blest if I can," said Tom, and they looked at each other.

"I know, the cookery book," exclaimed Dick, and a second later they were poring over it.

"See here—custard pudding's as easy as wink. You get the things while I read it out."

"No; I'll read it out," put in Dick hastily: "it's sure to want a light hand, and mine's heavy."

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"Rats! You haven't got to handle it at all. Besides, you can't read, and we haven't time for you to spell the words," for which Tom got the frying-pan at his head, but ducked in time. "Look sharp, there's no time to waste," he continued. "Boil one and a half pints of milk with two ounces of lump sugar, and pour it, boiling hot, over three eggs lightly beaten. Well, that sounds easy enough; you begin it while I see if the cloth is laid properly," and he went off, looking very knowing, and taking the book with him.

"Flavour with nutmeg or anything else preferred, and pour into a tart-dish," he shouted from the sitting-room, "look sharp, they'll be here in ten minutes."

"All right, it's done," came the response, "but it doesn't look right."

"Nonsense, it must be right; it's like the book."

"Perhaps that isn't all."

Tom picked up the book. Then he pulled a face, and exclaimed:

"By Jove! you've got to place the dish in another, three parts full of boiling water, and bake it slowly for forty minutes."

"Well, we haven't got another dish, so I can't. It'll just have to bake itself the best way it can."

"Perhaps we'd better change the name," called Tom. "Let's call it Montifiore pudding, and say it's new."

"Right you are. Here they come," and at the same moment a whoop was heard outside, and Captain Eyre rode up in his go-cart.

"What ho, you fellows!" he called. "Fulwell's just behind. He didn't know which sash to put on, and it hindered him rather. Ah, there he is," and they glanced down the road.

At the same instant Major Fulwell's cart caught in a deep rut, the pole was jerked out of the Kroo boys' hands, and back went the gallant Major into the road. He rose furious, but the Kroo boys, from a long and varied experience, knew better than to stay, and were already vanishing in the distance as Dick and Tom came to the rescue.

"Never mind, Major, the sash looks lovely," said Tom wickedly; and, after shaking his fist threateningly after the retreating figures, the Major allowed himself to be collared by his two hosts and hoisted up the bungalow steps.

Dick Lockhart had lately come in for some money, and the dinner was in honour of the event. They set to work promptly, once all seated, and the courses progressed rapidly; too rapidly, in fact, for no one seemed to be eating anything.

Dick kept his face, and swore at the cook's disgraceful cooking, but Tom exploded over the pudding. Instead of baking forty minutes slowly, it had baked forty-five minutes rapidly, with the result that the Captain asked mildly, if he might be favoured with the recipe and—a pick-axe. This was the signal for a general uproar, and the story came out, whereupon the two guests solemnly announced that nothing but a double allowance of champagne and an extra cock-tail would appease them. This was agreed to, and the hilarity increased.

On dessert and speech-time arriving, the Major congratulated Dick on his good fortune, and the Captain and Tom emphasized their feelings practically on his broad back.

The Queen and the Army were then toasted, and lastly Dick rose.

He first thanked them all heartily, then said, with a light in his eyes that bespoke some unusual cause for gladness, "and now, gentlemen, I have some news for you. Miss Bolton, whom I hope to marry directly I arrive in England, started out to Accra in the last boat with an aunt, who has been ordered a sea voyage. They are coming out here with the idea of returning at once with me. She knows you all well by name, and is looking forward to meeting you. May I ask you to drink to the good voyage and quick arrival of the sweetest girl in the world—my future wife?"

They rose instantly, and drank the toast with mingled expressions of congratulation, and pleasure. The idea of ladies among them was pleasing to all, even if only for two weeks, for the bungalow was on the outskirts of Accra, and they saw little enough of ladies' society.

When dinner was over they adjourned to the verandah, and Tom got his banjo. They loved a good comic song, these coasters, and were soon shouting choruses lustily, with palpable enjoyment. Finally the guests began to think about going home, and after taking leave somewhat boisterously, and coming back twice to clap Dick on the back and congratulate him again, they departed.

Before they turned in, Dick linked his arm through Tom's, and said affectionately, "You're quite sure you don't mind Miss Bolton and her aunt coming to the bungalow, old chap? I can easily get somewhere else for them to go if you'd rather, but it will only be for ten days."

"Of course not, I'm delighted," replied Tom readily. "We will show them all round, and we might make it a bit daintier, eh?"

"Yes, I have been thinking about it. We'll get some new curtains, and a few other things. You're bound to like her; everyone does," and his eyes shone. "I'm not going to leave her any more now I've got this money; that's why I'm so awfully glad about it," and in his exuberance of spirits he vaulted the table and vanished into his little room.

II.

"It's no use, I can't tell him," and Nellie Bolton gripped the ship-rail tightly, and gazed before her with white lips.

A man stood beside her, and he, too, gripped the rail till his knuckles stood out, but he looked at her, not across the sea.

"I don't see how you can help it," he said.

"I could be ill, or something, and let auntie tell him."

"He wouldn't be satisfied. Why won't you tell him yourself?"

"I am afraid," she said slowly. "I never was afraid of anything before, but I daren't look Dick Lockhart in the face and tell him I don't love him."

"Is it anger you fear, because you may be sure I shall not be far away?"

"Oh, no," hastily, "he will not be angry, but I know just how he will look at me, and just what a wretch I shall feel. He has looked like it before. Once when I was offended with him about something, and would not have anything to do with him all the evening, and once when I flirted very much with someone else. He is so good, Dick is, he doesn't understand people not being as good as himself. I believe I am always a little afraid of him. I suppose I ought never to have got engaged to him, but he was so masterful and determined about it. It would be all right if he wouldn't expect so much of me, but I can't alter my nature, and I never could be what he expects a woman to be. I don't know that I

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even want to," and she raised her beautiful face to his with a half-plaintive, half-childlike air.

And Horace Belcher looked back at her with his soul in his eyes.

"You don't expect women to be angels, do you?" she asked.

"No, I like them natural, with a few sins to correspond with my own. I like you, Nellie, just as you are, with all your wilfulness and follies, and all your thousand and one winsome ways. I love you, child, and I know I can make you happy. I do not ask anything of you, but that you love me in return."

"Ah!" and she heaved a sigh of content. "That is how I like to be loved, then I am not afraid. Dick talks to me sometimes about women leading men and inspiring them, and that sort of thing, and it oppresses me dreadfully. I don't want to lead or inspire anyone. I want to enjoy myself. It sounds horribly selfish, but I'm not altogether selfish. I can look after anyone who is ill or wants help, but I can't be ideal. I couldn't possibly live up to his standard."

"Why haven't you broken off your engagement before?"

"Partly because I was afraid, and partly because I didn't care for anyone else. I thought we should get used to each other aftewards, but now, of course, it's all different." And she dropped her eyes to the heaving waters and veiled them with their long silken lashes.

For some minutes they stood in silence, while his hand strayed to hers and closed over it.

"If only I could have written," she said presently.

"Yes, but it's impossible. He'll put off in the first surf-boat to the ship. Are you quite sure you won't go ashore with him and learn to forget me?"

"Oh, no, no," and she moved a step nearer, "now I know you, I could never go to him—never. Surely you won't desert me now?"

"No, a thousand times no," he breathed hastily, adding, after a pause, "but he has the first right."

"The right of choice is mine," she declared. "It will be much better for him in the end, because I never could have become what he wants me to. I will tell him all about it to-morrow."

* * * * *

The usual crowd gathered on the sands the following day when the steamer hove in sight, for in Accra, as in all colonial seaports, the arrival of the outward-bound steamer is one of the features of the week. No one felt quite the same interest in the homeward vessel, unless he happened to be going by it, and then, Heaven knows, he was glad enough. But the outward-bound brought letters and papers from the dear homeland, and eager eyes welcomed her.

But perhaps never before had a single pair of eyes expressed such a whole world of waiting delight as did Dick Lockhart's that sunny morning when the *Cabenda* anchored off Accra.

His friend, Tom Willoughby, could scarcely take his eyes off him.

The latter did not go out to the ship. He thought it would be nicer for them to meet alone, and when Dick had started in the surf-boat he went back to the bungalow to see that all was ready.

The boat had arrived in the afternoon, and so it was dark when at last he heard the click of the gate, and hastened to the door to greet them. But only one footstep fell on his ear, and that a slow, dragging one, and the greeting died away from his lips, as, with a strange wonder and sudden sense of dread, he stood and waited.

Then Dick entered and stood in the light, and a broken utterance escaped his friend's lips.

"Dick, old man," he exclaimed anxiously, and laid his hand on his arm.

But Dick only stared straight before him blankly, looking as if some great blow had shattered his reason for the time being.

Tom led him to a chair, and gently forced him into it, and then he mixed him something to drink and held it to his parched, dry lips.

It seemed to revive him a little, and he sat up and buried his face in his hands.

Tom looked round the room, and with the quick divination of love hurriedly pushed aside such of the preparations he could reach, which he knew would seem the greatest mockery.

Presently Dick rose and commenced pacing the little room.

At last he spoke.

"It's all over, Tom," he said, in a forced, unnatural voice. "She never really cared for me, and now there's another chap; he met her on board, and they fell in love with each other. I feel as if I could wring his neck, but where's the use? It wouldn't make her mine again, it wouldn't give me back what I have lost—nothing will. She has made me a hard man in one stroke," and he set his lips, stern and relentless.

"No, not that, Dick," and Tom spoke with a seriousness that was new to him. "When you say that, you virtually acknowledge that you have gone under because of a girl. If I were you I would fight it out with myself to the end. I wouldn't let my life be spoilt for such a girl as that."

"But I loved her," he muttered half fiercely, "and love isn't child's play with me. It's everything—just everything. I—I—" he stopped short and caught his breath—"I feel as if I were going mad, Tom," he finished brokenly.

"Poor old chap," was the low reply. "If I were you I should just give way for a bit, and have it out by myself. You'll feel better afterwards," and he led him to a chair by the table.

Dick hesitated a moment, then leant his head down on his arms, and let his feelings find vent.

Tom stole softly away, but he came back presently, and stayed with him all through that long, bitter night. And in the bitter days that followed, when a sharp attack of fever laid the stricken man low, he nursed him hourly with never failing tenderness.

For if the love of men does not equal that of women, it comes strangely near it sometimes.

GERTRUDE PAGE.

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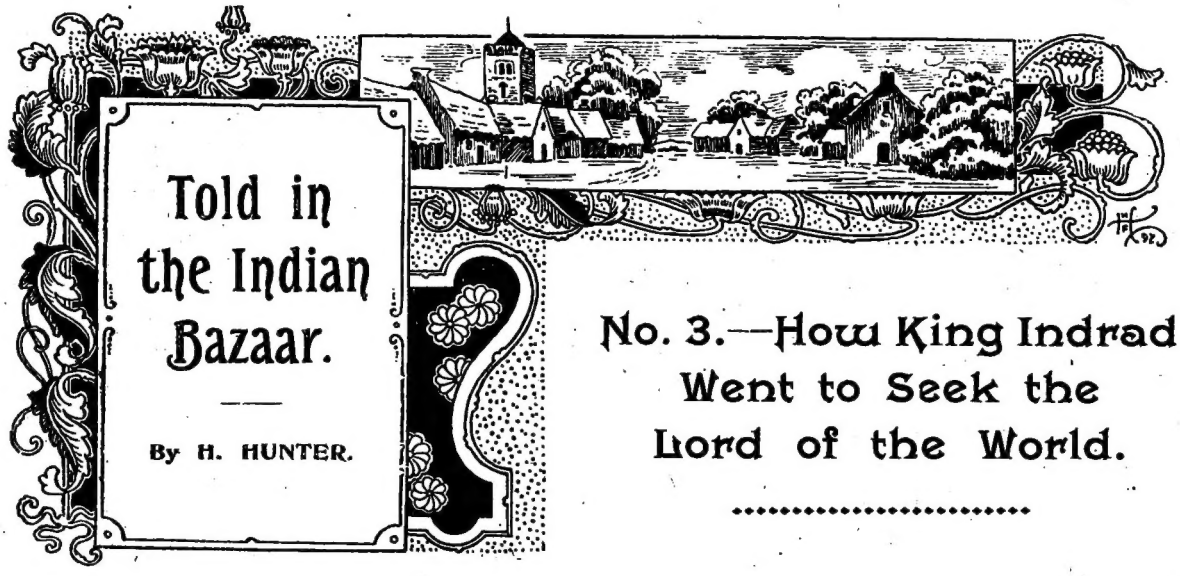
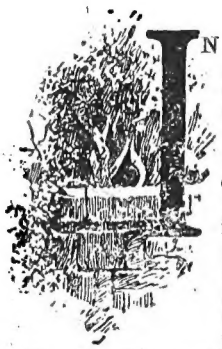


Told in the Indian Bazaar.

By H. HUNTER.

No. 3.—How King Indrad Went to Seek the Lord of the World.



IN the days when the gods lived among men, King Indradyumna sat on the throne of Malwa, and there was peace in the land. This was the time which our fathers have called the Golden Age. The earth was fair and beautiful to look upon, no evil thing had found its way into any corner of it; morning and evening the people brought their offerings of jungle flowers and wild fruits, and laid them on the sacred stone; and no man was jealous of his neighbour.

Now the Queen of King Indradyumna was curious to behold the face of an immortal, and inquired diligently of her maids and tirewomen concerning them; but none knew where was their dwelling place, and not the wisest at King Indrad's court could say what shape they assumed, or under what form they appeared.

But the Queen's curiosity consumed her like fire; it gave her no rest, so that her health suffered; and, as King Indradyumna had no heir to his throne, he began to grow uneasy. So one morning a royal proclamation was fastened up at the great gate of the Palace. Riches and honour with a place at the King's right hand were promised to the man who, by a certain day, should bring to the Chamberlain the news which the Queen desired.

And because of the reward offered by the King, many men of the city went up and down searching for the Blue Mountain, where it was said the Greatest of All had made his dwelling.

The appointed day came, and no man presented himself. Then the King rose up and, descending the steps of the throne on which he had been sitting, threw dust upon his beard, and with a loud voice called upon Heaven to assist him.

Just then a crow flew in at the open window, and perched himself on the back of the throne. "Who is he," said the crow, "that calls upon Heaven when the Lord of the World is visiting the earth?"

But when the King began to explain the crow cut him short. "And pray, Mr. King," said he, "what steps have you taken to find Him whom you desire to see? A proclamation! Robes of honour, rewards of money! Didst thou then, O King, expect men to find the Great One without faith in their hearts and love in their bosoms? Marvel not that your searching has been in vain. Now, if King Indrad be not of too proud a stomach to take advice from such a poor creature as a crow, let him tear down the proclamation at the gate of his Palace, and send the crier through the city, calling upon all men of clean hearts and sound consciences to present themselves before him on the morrow at the hour of morning sacrifice. Then let the King send to the East and to the West, to the North and to the South, and haply if it please Nárrayan, the King's desire may be accomplished. And for this saying, O King, I give thee a sign."

Whereupon the black crow changed immediately to a white dove, and flew away through the open window.

On the morrow, King Indrad sat at the great gate of the Palace to receive the men of clean hearts; but at the hour for sacrifice, behold there were but four who had ventured to answer the summons — a leather-dresser, a barber, a grass-cutter, and a weaver. These, rubbing their foreheads in the dust, proclaimed themselves the servants of the King.

Then King Indrad sent them forth; one to the East, one to the West, one to the North, and one to the South, bidding them search throughout the land for forty days, and inquire whithersoever they went for the Great God, who was Lord over all the earth.

Now when the forty days were expired, those who went to the West, and to the North, and to the South, returned; but he who went to the East returned not; so King Indrad comforted his Queen, and told her that the omen was favourable, since the weaver would have returned had he met with no better success than his fellows.

Now the weaver had journeyed on till he came to the great jungle, inquiring of all he met, but without finding any to tell him where the Lord of the World might be found.

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"We have heard of him," said many, "but no man hath seen him, or knoweth where to seek the Blue Mountain which stands upon the earth, but whose top is in the heavens."

Only one queer little old fellow whom he had met several times had answered briefly in a gruff voice: "Further on, further on," and the weaver, believing the gruff little man, had kept going "further on," convinced that he must surely find the Lord of the World, if he sought diligently after him.

So he pressed forward, thinking only of his errand, and not counting the time. Through thicket and thorn, through bush and through brake, he plodded, feeling neither hunger nor thirst, neither fatigue of body nor weariness of mind, animated only by one desire—to reach the Blue Mountain and find the Lord of the World.

The jungle-folk watched in wonderment as the man passed along, but none offered to molest him or sought to do him harm.

The tiger ceased to growl, and, creeping behind the tall canes, waited in silence whilst the weaver went by. The leopard and the panther looked on in amazement, and, having stared their fill, trotted off into the gloom. Only the jackals gamboled about him, and the birds piped in the trees.

Now and again a black crow came out of the jungle and flew round his head, alighting each time on the ground a few yards in front of his feet. When the crow had done this for the third time the weaver accepted it as an omen, and, addressing the crow, said, "Crow, crow, which way must I go to find the Blue Mountain? Pray tell me, good crow," and the crow answered. "Further on, further on."

Then plucking up courage the weaver tramped along bravely, for, said he, "both the old man and the crow say the same thing, so it must be right." Moreover, the crow kept him company, which he thought was a good sign, and, whenever he put his question, the crow always returned him the same answer.

At last, about the end of the third day, the crow flew into a tamarind tree by the side of the path and disappeared. Then the weaver saw straight before him a hut from which blue smoke was rising, and shouting his thanks to the crow he hurried up to the hut, which he reached just as a woodman entered it.

"Good evening," said the weaver. "Rest is sweet after toil," but the woodman answered not a word.

The table was set for a meal; the woodman motioned his guest to a seat, and a woman brought water to pour on his hands. A carpet was spread for him in a corner of the roof whereon to sleep; and when he opened his eyes in the morning, lo! there was the Blue Mountain, with the sun shining on it from afar.

Now the woodman knew, when he saw him, what the weaver had come for, and was jealous lest he should discover the shrine which the Lord of the World himself had set up in the heart of the Blue Mountain.

"For," said he, "King Indrad will surely offer to build him a temple, and I shall lose my god, and where shall I look for another?" So for three days he kept silence, while the weaver abode in the house waiting for a favourable omen.

In the night, as the weaver lay awake on the roof with his face to the stars, a jackal barked in the jungle. "Ah!" said he as he listened, "the time is at hand."

In the morning the woodman took fruit and flowers and went off to the mountain; but when the weaver sought to accompany him he made excuses, saying "To-morrow, friend, to-morrow," and this he said every day, hoping to weary the weaver. But every day the weaver renewed his attempt. So the woodman bethought him of a plan whereby he might keep the weaver in the jungle and the secret of the Blue Mountain from the ears of King Indrad.

"Marry my daughter," said he to the weaver, "and settle down in the wood, then will we go together and offer sacrifice in the Blue Mountain."

"Agreed," said the weaver. So he married the woodman's daughter, but the secret shrine of the Lord of the World seemed as far away from him as ever; for the woodman continued to go there alone, making always the same answer to the weaver which he had made him before. But in this he reckoned without counting the woman whom he had given the man to wife.

"Hearken!" said she, joining hands with her husband, "and I will tell thee what thou must do. Keep thy bed like a sick man, and leave the rest to me."

Then she went to her father, and with tears and entreaties implored him, till, moved by her supplications, the woodman consented to take the weaver with him.

"But," said he, "he shall go thither blindfolded, since if he know the way, he will return to his master, and I shall be as naught in the eyes of King Indradyumna. He shall see the Lord of the World in his secret dwelling-place, but the way thither he may not know."

So the wife said to her husband:

"Take this bag of mustard-seed, drop it as you go, and all will be as you wish."

Now, on a certain morning in the same week, everything being ready, the woodman blindfolded the weaver, and off they went together through the forest to the Blue Mountain.

WHY IS YOUR NOSE LIKE ST. PAUL'S?

See this Week's PEARSON'S WEEKLY.

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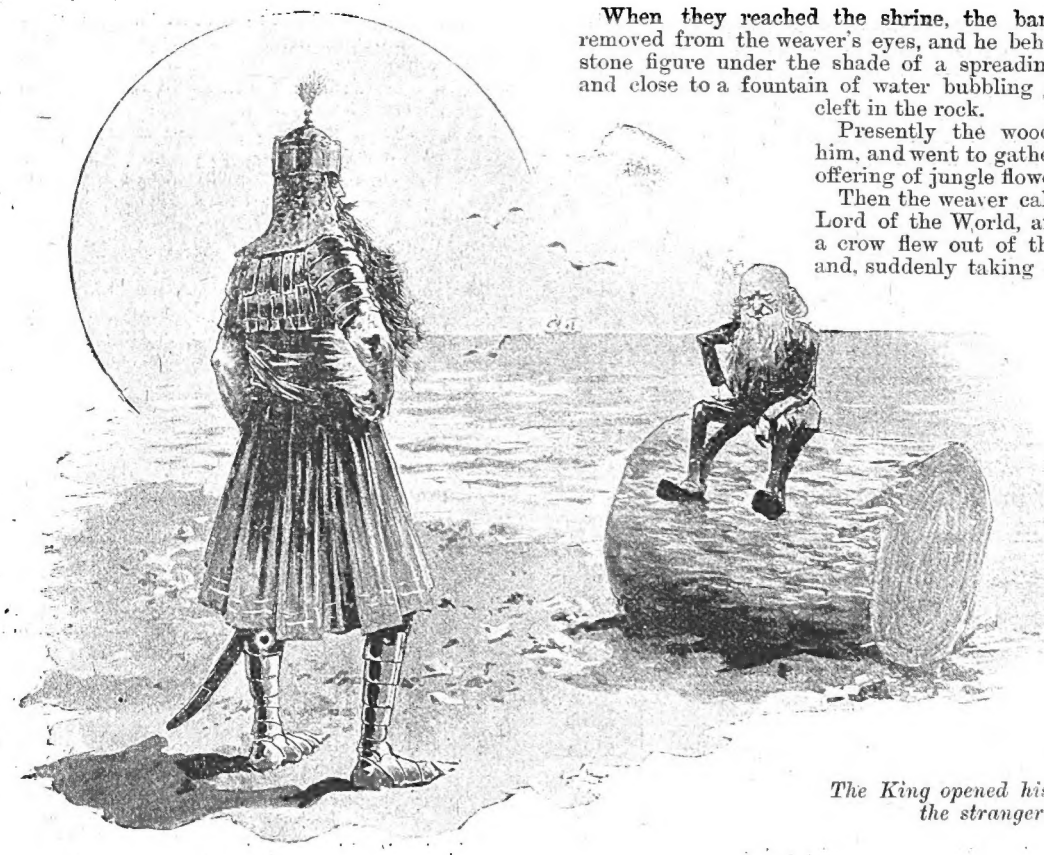

When they reached the shrine, the bandage was removed from the weaver's eyes, and he beheld a blue stone figure under the shade of a spreading fig-tree, and close to a fountain of water bubbling up from a cleft in the rock.

Presently the woodman left him, and went to gather his daily offering of jungle flowers.

Then the weaver called on the Lord of the World, and, behold a crow flew out of the fig-tree, and, suddenly taking a glorious

The King opened his mind to the stranger.

form, soared up into the blue heaven above, and was lost to sight.

"How easy," thought the weaver, "is the path to eternal bliss from this holy spot!" and, climbing into the tree, would have tried to follow the crow; but a voice cried to him saying: "First go back to thy master, and tell King Indrad the good news that the Lord of the World has been found."

At this moment the woodman returned, and when he heard from the weaver all that had happened it made him very unhappy. "Ah!" thought he, "this weaver's going to be a troublesome fellow. Now if I can contrive to leave him behind I shall hear no more of him. He can never find his way through the jungle alone, so shall I keep the secret of the Blue Mountain from the strangers who covet it for themselves."

Then, dissembling his voice: "Well, well," said he aloud, spreading out his flowers, "not a single one of the five blossoms of Heaven in the whole bunch. That comes of dreaming, Master Weaver. Just wait while I gather a few from the purple patch under the banyan."

Off slipped the woodman, leaving the weaver at the shrine.

At last, tired of waiting, the weaver went home, finding his way easily enough by the seed he had dropped in the morning. When the woodman saw him he was troubled; and, running to his daughter, promised that whatever her husband asked of him he would grant it.

"He wants nothing, poor fellow," said she, "but to be allowed to depart to tell King Indrad that the Lord of the World has been found."

"Let him go in peace," answered the woodman.

So the weaver went.

Now it fell out that when the good news was told to the King his heart swelled within him, and he cried:

"Is there any on earth to compare with me—the man whom the Greatest of All has chosen to build his temple?"

But a voice answered him:

"O, King! thou shalt indeed build my temple, but me thou shalt not behold."

So when the road through the great jungle was cut, and the King reached the foot of the Blue Mountain, the stone image had vanished.

Then the King sent for carpenters and masons, and built a magnificent temple by the sea, but there was no man on earth found holy enough to consecrate it.

King Indrad, plunged in despair, had worn himself to a shadow, when one day the Queen, grieved to see her lord so distressed, happened to say:

"Oh, dear! I wonder now if Brahma would consent to do you this service?"

"Best of councillors," said the King; "I will set off immediately."

So King Indrad went to Heaven to beg Brahma to come down and consecrate the temple which he had built for the Lord of the World to dwell in. But he was gone so long that nine generations of kings had reigned upon the earth before he returned; and the

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temple itself was claimed by another. So at Brahma's suggestion the matter was referred to a crow—a wise old bird which sat perched on the branch of a tree in the temple gardens, listening to all the talk that was going on below. The crow declared that it was King Indradyumna who had built the temple; and the King, believing that the last difficulty had been surmounted, besought the Lord of the World to appear before him that he might set up his image on the holy spot. Yet for all this, King Indradyumna found not the god.

Now, one morning, long after Brahma had gone back to Heaven, the King rose up early, and went for a walk on the sands. Slowly he paced along, pondering how he could induce the Lord of the World to take up his residence in the stately temple which looked down on the mysterious sea. Suddenly he spied a queer little fellow sitting on a block of timber which had been thrown up by the waves.

"Good morning," said the gruff old man. "What brings you out so early?"

Then the King opened his mind to the stranger, who directed him to take the block of wood to the temple and the Lord of the World would tell him what further to do with it.

So the King collected a great army, and went down with 5,000 elephants to drag the block up to the gates. They pulled and tugged for a week, but the timber defied all efforts to move it, till a crow, who was watching them, said: "Send for the woodman who lives over against the Blue Mountain. Not one of you has thought of the poor servant in your haste to buy favour of the master."

Now when the block was brought up to the temple, the King saw that it was rough and ragged, and full of defects; and, marvelling that the Lord of the World should have chosen such a sorry piece, he sent for carpenters to trim and dress it. But when the chisels were put to the wood, behold! the iron lost its edge, and curled up as if it had been tin.

"Ho, ho!" said the King, "what is this we have here? No log that ever grew can resist steel."

"Indeed!" said the crow, "and pray how old art thou, who pretendest an acquaintance with all the trees in the forest? Thou art of yesterday, O man! but this timber has seen a thousand such as thee. Saw ye not the undying fig tree by the water of life in the Blue Mountain, and have ye no eyes that ye cannot recognise it again? You have eyes, O King! but you see not the mystery which lies at the heart of the world. Think ye then ye would know the Lord thereof were he to reveal himself unto thee? Go now, leave the log in the temple. At the end of twenty days thou mayst return. It will be according to thy willingness to serve and thy power to obey."

Then the crow flew away and was seen in that part no more.

So the King sealed up the door of the temple with his own seal, and swore that for twenty days no man should enter it. But the Queen, tormented with curiosity to learn the secret of the shrine, gave the King no peace; and the fond, foolish man, being persuaded by the silly woman, opened the door before the end of the appointed time.

Alas! for King Indradyumna; from that hour he beheld no more the light of the sun, and the noonday was even as the night. Then he prayed to the god, and a voice said: "Ask what thou wouldst."

"I ask," said the blind King, "that none who come after me may say I built this temple and taught men to walk humbly before the Lord of the World."

Thus it fell out that the Queen also did not escape, for King Indradyumna was the last of his line.

Result of "War Competition."

The winner of the first prize in the "War Competition" is C. T. Frost, 11 Bosworth, Rugby, whose attempt was the most nearly correct.

A prize of £1 each has been forwarded to the following five:

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A. Clarke, care of E. Bishop, 2 St. Andrew's Hill, E.C.
N. Cavanagh, 23 King Street, Victoria Docks.
J. H. Kendle, 55 High Street, Bognor.
Miss M. Hughes, 25 St. Andrew's Road, Liverpool.

To the next twenty-five books have been forwarded.

Emily Cramphorn, 4 Wellington Road, Wanstead, N.E.
F. Gibbons, Moorland Road, Bournemouth.
Mrs. Luck, care of Purvis, 395 High Road, Leytonstone.
J. E. Const, 101 Victoria Buildings, Clerkenwell Road, E.C.
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Joseph Bell, 83 Albert Edward Road, Liverpool.
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J. Matthews, "Inverie," Thornton Avenue, Chiswick.

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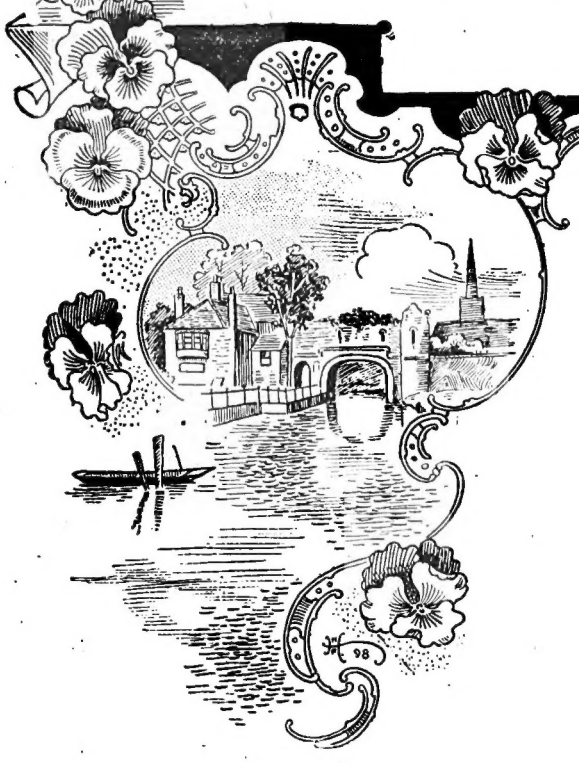
A RASH VOW.



Charles Riguelet had been left an orphan in early childhood, and had been brought up by his uncle, the curé of the parish, who had educated and destined him for the priesthood. The gentle, generous old man stripped himself of all he possessed to help his poor people, and died when Charles was nearly twenty, leaving him nothing but his blessing and his books.

The young man was exempt from military service in view of his future calling, and for some months time hung very heavily on his hands. He felt he had no real vocation for the priesthood, but then he had neither money nor influence to help him in any other career.

On fine evenings he was in the habit of walking out to Croissey and climbing up into the branches of an old yew-tree, where he used to dream impossible dreams and watch the setting sun, with its thousand gorgeous tints lighting up the surrounding country.

One night, just as the moon was rising, he heard voices beneath him, and his ear caught the words: "The last time!" uttered in tearful tones by a woman's voice.

Her sobs were audible, and then he heard a man say tenderly:

"Courage, Louise, my dear one, the time will soon pass. Be brave."

"But it's a shame!" cried a clear young voice indignantly. "They have no right to take you away from us! Eugène, why did you not tell them that you were just going to be married, and had a young sister to keep?"

"I am afraid, Christine, that would not have done much good. You see, until I *am* married they will not regard me as a family man, and it is our duty to sacrifice ourselves for the good of our country."

"And they'll send you away to some horrid climate where you'll die of fever, like Piérre and Etienne last year!" sobbed the girl.

"My little sister, you know I would have done anything I could in honour to have stayed with you and Louise, but the only way of escape I could have found was by providing a substitute, and that you know was impossible with our straitened means."

"Louise and I would have sold all our trinkets, and everything nice we had."

"I know you would," interrupted her brother, "but that would not have brought in nearly enough."

"Then I will sell myself!" cried Christine recklessly. "I am young, and they say not bad-looking, and I swear on this cross which contains our mother's hair, that if any man will take your place, I will marry him when he comes back!"

"Child, child, you are over-wrought and don't know what you are saying! Thank Heaven there is no one to hear you!" said Eugène, stroking her cheek and looking nervously round.

Charles Riguelet felt distinctly uncomfortable, but it was too late to acquaint them of his presence. He could not, however, resist the temptation of looking down to see the face of this devoted sister.

The lovers were standing close together, and Christine was facing them with flashing eyes and the little gold cross raised in her right hand so that it glittered in the moonlight.

Her brother and Louise seemed to be reasoning with her in a low tone, and after a few minutes conversation they all turned to go.

Riguelet could just see the knot of ribbon and the fatal number in the young man's hat as they passed beneath him.

A couple of hours later, when Eugène and his sister were pretending to eat their last meal together, and Louise was sitting beside him with tearless eyes and a drawn, strained look upon her pretty face, there came a sharp knock at the door which made them all start and look fearfully at one another.

'Come in!' said Eugène, pulling himself together.

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The door opened and showed an old sergeant, who asked in a gruff voice:

"Are you the conscript Livon?"

"Yes, sergeant."

"Then that's for you," he said, throwing an official-looking letter on to the table.

Eugène took it up and opened it with trembling hands. He began to read it, first mechanically, then feverishly, and finally let it fall from his hands with a dazed and bewildered expression on his face.

It was a formal release from military service.

"But, how, what does it mean?" he stammered.

"Why it means that someone has come forward to serve in your place," said the sergeant. "But it's a pity to my thinking. It does a young man good to smell powder early in life! However, I expect you're glad enough, and someone else too," he added, with a sly look at Louise, who was clinging to her lover with a radiant face.

"Well, good-night," said the old man, moving towards the door. Then he suddenly remembered something, and turning round, asked:

"Where is Mademoiselle Christine Livon, your sister?"

"There she is," answered Eugène, pointing to the young girl who was devouring the contents of the precious document.

"That's for you, mam'selle," he said, throwing another letter on the table.

"You will stop and drink a glass of wine with us, sergeant? We must celebrate this joyful occasion," said Eugène cordially.

The old man accepted and sat down with them, while Louise busied herself about the duties of hostess which Christine seemed to have entirely forgotten. The old sergeant watched her light, deft movements and the taste with which she laid out the simple repast, and turning to the young man said jokingly:

"I admire your choice. You're better off here than you would be in barracks. Your health, young ladies!"

He raised his glass and looked first at Louise, then at Christine, but the girl was as pale as death, and the letter he had given her was crushed up in her right hand as she sat staring blankly at the table in front of her.

"What's the matter, Christine?" cried her brother anxiously. "The letter? Has anyone dared to annoy you?" and he took it quickly from the girl's unresisting hand.

"Read it aloud," she said in a hollow voice. He did so:

"Mademoiselle,—I am going to replace your brother, for you need him and I have no one to miss me, I am alone in the world. I saw your grief to-night and it went to my heart. I send you a ring that belonged to my mother, and the only condition I make is that, if you have any kindly feeling for me, you place the gold cross I saw in your hand in a nitch in the old yew-tree at Croissey, so that I may fetch it before I start to-morrow morning. If I live I will bring it back to you in three years, if not I will send it to you. Do you remember the vow you made upon it?

"Adieu."

"What does this mean?" said Eugène slowly. "Can't you throw any light upon it, sergeant?"

"Evidently someone overheard you talking, and he is playing the friend in need."

"But why did he not come forward and speak, like a man?"

"Oh, I dare say he felt shy, or perhaps he's romantic and thought he would make more impression this way," chuckled the old man. Eugène shook his head and frowned

"I can't accept such a substitute. I will not allow my sister to sacrifice herself to an utter stranger. I will come with you, now—let me just—" and he made as though he would tear the letter to pieces.

"Stop, Eugéne," cried Christine, waking up from her reverie at these words. "*I* accept him! Give me the letter, it is my affair. He makes no demand upon me, he is noble and generous, and I will send him the gold cross. I'm glad he didn't come himself," she said after a pause. "Have you seen him, sergeant?"

"Yes, for a minute or two."

"He's not lame or hump-backed or anything of that sort, is he?" she asked anxiously.

"My dear young lady, is the French army made up of such people?—such a one would not have been looked at for a second."

"But do you think he's nice?" she persisted.

"Yes, I should think so, very nice."

"Very well then," she said, detaching the cross from its chain, "will you put this where he can find it, and say no more to him, but keep your eye upon him and bring him back safely and tell me that he is a brave soldier."

The old sergeant's eyes were a trifle dim as he took the young girl's pledge of sisterly devotion and heard her pathetic words.

Eugène and Louise saw that it was no good reasoning with the wilful girl, and looked on in silence, trusting that the future would bring a way out of the difficulty.

When the three were alone again, Christine turned to Louise, and said with a grave smile:

"Now I am engaged too, and my pledge is with a soldier of France."

Eugène and Louise were married very soon after this, and Christine, who lived with them, seemed to have changed from a merry, romping child, into a grave, thoughtful maiden.

A year later the great war with Germany broke out, and Eugène had to go to the front; but this time, his wife and sister, like true French women, choked back their tears, and bade him God-speed with brave faces as he went forth to meet the invading force.

He escaped unhurt till the attack upon the village of Le Bourget, when he got separated from his fellows and was trying to hold his own against three stalwart Germans. His strength was failing when he heard a voice shout:

"Conscript, save your life for your wife and sister. Let me settle these fellows!" and with that a young officer dashed up and cut down two of his opponents. The next moment the officer's horse was shot under him, and, as he fell, the remaining German sprang forward bayonet in hand, but Eugène was too quick for him, and succeeded in disabling him before he reached the French officer.

This incident was the beginning of a strange and firm friendship between the two men. It seemed especially strong on the officer's side, and he found many opportunities of ameliorating the sufferings of his subordinate during the long and disastrous campaign.

When all was over, and the remnants of the French army were allowed to return to their homes, Eugène was greatly exercised in his mind as to how he could show his gratitude to his friend.

At last, learning that Lieutenant Riguelet had neither home nor friends to go to, he timidly suggested that he should share what remained to him and his wife. Louise and Christine had taken refuge in Bordeaux with an

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aunt of the former, and it was there that Eugène proposed to settle for the present.

Lieutenant Rigue'et accepted the kindly offer most readily, and received a warm welcome from the wife and sister of the man he had so generously befriended.

It soon became evident that a powerful attraction drew him and Christine together, and in due course he asked Eugène for his sister's hand. He had decided to leave the army, and had been fortunate in obtaining an appointment in one of the large city firms of Bordeaux.

"Nothing would please me better," said Eugène, "but remember, my sister has not been brought up like you; she has not had much education, and you might find after a time that you had made a mistake, and if she ever guessed that it would break the poor child's heart, for I believe she is very fond of you."

Riguelet soon overruled these objections, and convinced Eugène that nothing could ever alter his love for Christine. "I have watched her with loving, jealous eyes," he said, "and I am determined that no other woman shall ever be my wife."

Eugène went to his sister and told her of his friend's offer. For a moment the girl's eyes shone with a happy light, and then her face became suddenly grave.

"But, Eugéne, I am not free, the three years have not passed yet," she faltered.

"My dear child, you surely don't think any more of that foolish escapade?"

"Of course I do. My word was given, and I consider myself bound by it till I am released by the return of the token."

"But suppose you never get it? Suppose he is dead?"

"Then he will send it to me, or I will mourn him as my betrothed. You should be the last to tempt me to slight him, Eugéne, for if he had not come forward in our hour of need, you might never have been married to Louise."

"Yes, that's true enough, but I can't bear for you to lose the love of a man like Riguelet for an unknown adventurer, who has perhaps forgotten all about you by this time."

He saw that his words pained her, and added gently:

"Perhaps you don't love Riguelet?"

"It is just because I *do* love him that I dare not contemplate the prospect of becoming his wife. It is so hard to keep my word now that I have met him, that I am afraid of myself!"

Seeing that further conversation only made her more miserable, Eugène left her and told his friend the whole story of his sister's rash vow and the weight she still attached to it. Riguelet listened without any sign of disappointment and merely asked to see Christine alone.

She received him with evident emotion and listened to his earnest pleadings with tears in her eyes and sorrow at her heart, but she remained true to her resolution.

"At least tell me if you could ever have loved me," he said, taking her hand in his.

"I do love you," she said, raising her eyes to his, "and it is because I love and honour you that I would not have your wife's name stained by a breach of faith."

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed. "I have won you for my very own! It was I who served in your brother's place and sent you that letter, but I would not redeem your promise till I was sure that you loved me."

She trembled violently, and her hand involuntarily sought the ring which she always wore on the chain round her neck.

"But the cross?" she murmured. "You were to bring it back."

"Unfortunately that is no longer in my possession," he said sadly. "One day before going into action I gave it to the old sergeant and charged him to return it to you. I had come to the conclusion that it would be unfair to claim your promise, and had I not met Eugène I should never have sought you out. As you have not received it I fear he must be dead."

Christine looked earnestly at him. His words and manner had every appearance of truth, but the disquieting thought oppressed her that Eugène, treating the whole thing as a joke, had persuaded Riguelet to play this part.

"You will think me hard and unbelieving," she said slowly, with evident effort, "but I dare not marry till I am released from my vow, either by the return of my pledge or the expiration of the three years."

He left her with mingled feelings of anger at her incredulity and admiration for her staunch adherence to her word.

The next day he left for Paris, where he tried in vain to get tidings of the sergeant, but all he could ascertain was that he had been severely wounded during the war, and had not been heard of since. With a heavy heart he set out on the return journey and arrived late at night at the bachelor abode he had hoped so soon to quit. On his table he found a note in Christine's writing. He tore it open and read the one word "Come."

She was waiting for him, and one glance at her face told him all was well. In her right hand she held the little gold cross.

"But how did you come by it?" he asked, when the joy of meeting had been eloquently, if silently expressed.

"The day after you left, a hospital nurse called to see me and gave me a small packet which she said she had promised a dying man to deliver into my hands. She had been looking for me for a long time and then traced me through inquiring about Eugène. I opened it and found the cross inclosed in a touching letter from the dear old sergeant. He has nothing but praise to say of you and hopes we may long be spared to each other."

The first journey the young people made after their marriage was to the old yew tree at Croissey.

Mary Fermor.

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THE GLADIATOR

A TALE OF THE EASTERN EMPIRE

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

PART THE FIRST.

"THE AMBITIONS OF YOUTH."

SUMMARY.

THE opposing factions in the public games of ancient Constantinople were known as the "Blues and Greens." The Emperor and Empress favoured the Blues, and consequently the enmity that existed between the two factions was so strong that they could not meet in the streets without coming to blows.

Rhesus, a country youth from Sicily, lands at Constantinople with his friend, Proclus, and with a fixed determination to become famous as a gladiator. He adopts the cause of the Greens, and the first contest in which he takes part is a chariot race, which he would have won had it not been for the foul play of Hermiot, his opponent of the Blues.

Rhesus falls in love with Eutasia, a pretty little waif of the circus, of twelve years, who speedily becomes warmly attached to him.

CHAPTER III.

CALM BEFORE STORM.

AFTER that night the frenzy of the factions abated somewhat, though they still plotted against each other in secret, using every influence, honest or dishonest, to raise their own partizans to the places of public power.

But the balance of gain remained with the blues, so implacable was the hatred of the wilful Theodora to the green, the colour her father Acacius favoured so much that he had been the keeper of the beasts for it up to his death.

One day, when idling in the house, Proclus told his friend with great gusto of how his father had taken him, when quite a child, to the hippodrome, and Acacius had sent his three daughters—Theodora, Comito, and Anastasia—round the crowded ring to beg for largess; and how the green faction had treated them with contempt, the blue with pity.

"Little Comito, I well remember," said he, "she was better-looking than her sister, our present Empress, and but for falling into evil hands, would doubtless have captured the affections of Justinian for herself. But Theodora was the boldest of the three, and lost no opportunities, and she must have played her nets skilfully to have ensnared the nephew of Justin so completely that he made a fresh law to render their marriage legal, as all the world knows."

"And in three years she has forgotten her origin—or affects to have forgotten it—and has turned upon her father's friends," mused Rhesus.

"As your little charge, Eutasia, will some day forget you," rejoined the cynic.

"I trust not; I think not," said Rhesus. "She is of a better mind than that, I trow."

"You are a country youth yet, for all my teaching, Rhesus. Now, I have seen so many of these waifs and strays——"

"That you brand them all with the same degradation!" retorted Rhesus hotly. "A plague on city manners, if these be such! But I know your satire is skin-deep only, Proclus; that beneath it all you hope with me that the little maid may grow up better than the rest. It shall not be my fault if she does not."

"You might have a worse desire, a worse mission," said Proclus, "and if you are sincere in it, you must keep a careful watch on the doings of Marcen, and the attentions of that fiery young Hermiot who lost us the chariot race."

"That will I," said his friend.

And would have said more, but just then a soft hand closed over his mouth, and another over his eyes, and a merry voice cried:

"Say who, Rhesus; say who?"

Who, indeed, but the subject of their talk?

As Rhesus uttered her name, her warm arms slipped round his neck, and her red lips met on his forehead.

"Ah! I have heard some of your secrets!" she cried, in her gladsome voice. "You don't want me to grow up like the others—I don't want to!—I don't think I shall! You are jealous of Marcen and Hermiot—I don't like them a bit! There, Rhesus, you see I can understand a great deal more than you think, if I am only twelve and-a-half—though they say I look four years older!"

And she came and stood before him on tip-toes, to increase her little height. Proclus slipped out of the room while she spoke, and they heard him fingering the strings of his harp in the outer court.

"You are too precocious for one so young and fair," said Rhesus chidingly, stroking her sunny locks with an unsteady hand. "You should not listen to such talk."

"But I have listened, Rhesus," she answered merrily, "and I am glad I have, because I know now that you like me and will take care of me. I love you very much, and I was afraid you did not care for me. Now I am happy."

And with a sweet confidence in him that completed her conquest, she nestled to his side and looked into his eyes with those clear blue orbs of hers so intently, that he put up his hand to cover them, as in play. He felt somehow abashed before the gaze of those earnest eyes, the eyes of a waif of the circus; it seemed as though he were not worthy of the love of the pure soul that gazed through them. The charioteers and city idlers who haunted the hippodrome and the lower quarters of the palace did not live lives of the best kind, and Rhesus doubted his fitness, after some months of mixing with these roysterers, to take little Eutasia's happiness and destiny into his own keeping for ever. He never doubted, from the first, that she would agree, that her childish liking would develop into later love, that he would never find another fair to so encharm his heart. The only thing he doubted was his own worthiness; he was twenty-one and very philosophic—an Epicurean of the Epicureans.

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"I am glad you are happy, my sunny one," he said, stroking her soft cheeks and resolving to risk the hazard of following his desire, "and most glad that you like me so well. Will you promise me, 'Tasia, to let me call you my own, to be my little sweetheart—to marry me when you grow old enough?"

There was a child's amused pleasure in her laughing eyes as she promised gaily, a child's delight; and yet a strange light dawning there that was something more, and Rhesus felt, now that this soul was committed to his keeping, now that he had prejudiced this one sweet maid against all the world for his sake, something of manhood's responsibilities upon his young shoulders.

"So we are sweethearts indeed, now, little 'Tasia," he said, kissing her tenderly, "and you must let me come and take you out in the day and protect you from the rough gladiators of the arena, and I will see that old Sibron's wife takes care of you and dresses you well. And Proclus will be our friend always. You like him also, don't you, sunny one?"

"Yes. He is very cruel in his talk sometimes, but he is not cruel, really. I think I like him next to you, Rhesus. And next to him I like Marcen, who is so clever with his sword."

Awhile longer they talked, until the twilight shadows crept across the marble floor; and then Proclus came in and began to tease Eutasia so that the tears stood on her cheeks, and Rhesus had to intervene on her behalf, and tell his friend what they had agreed in his absence. Then, with a couple of sturdy slaves, they sent her to old Sibron's house.

Proclus laughed when she had gone, but at last confessed that Rhesus had done right, and promised to aid him to the utmost until she grew old enough to know her own mind.

"After that," said he. "I shall clear my hands of you."

So Rhesus won that little heart for his own, and thereafter the days glided by for him in continuous content in that city between the seas.

"You are too precocious for one so young and fair," said Rhesus.

Though he still wore the badge of green, and sometimes drove a chariot for the faction in the races, he thought more of Eutasia than of aught else.

Together with Proclus and some of the quieter folk of their acquaintance—for he had cried, "Enough!" to the gay life so gaily begun—they went to the various pleasure haunts round the city, to the many festivals, or voyaged up and down the narrow strait and by the verdant shores of the Euxine Sea.

The time passed very pleasantly for those wild and troubled years, and while plots and counter-plots seethed round them, and the fortunes of the factions rose and fell, and the exactions of the ministers and rebellious murmurs of the people grew apace, and the rumours of foreign war began to emanate from Court, Rhesus watched his sweet Eutasia upgrowing into a lovely girl on the verge of womanhood, her increasing beauty and charm giving still greater promise for a time of love's fulfilment. Year by year she grew in grace and loveliness, till all the gilded youth of the city were at her feet, and costly presents were daily left at Sibron's door.

Those the old curmudgeon kept for his own use, and guarded Eutasia well, and as for the girl herself, she never once wavered, never once failed in her childish promise. Hermiot, who was one of the most daring of her admirers, Rhesus had met and defeated in a duel, and Marcen had apparently taken the plain warning and so left her unmolested.

That heart was his, and his alone, and that knowledge kept Rhesus back from the easy ways of sin that the others trod, and made him a true man. For he grew in strength and statue and skill, as she in beauty, and when he had reached and passed his four and twentieth year, he was one of the most sought after and idolised of the gladiators who pursued their calling for the love of it, rather than for the lust of gold.

And also, though that added not to his popularity, young Rhesus gathered round him a little band of believers in the gods of the olden time; a faithful few who still clung to the poetic traditions handed down from the sturdy generations who in their time had made Greece famous and Rome great.

These few friends—of whom Proclus was one, though for social reasons he kept much in the background—all wore the badge of green, and kept alive, by tongue and pen, the old religion in face of the overpowering wealth and influence of the Christian church. Even pretty Eutasia was made a proselyte, and that with little trouble.

So, knit together by the bonds of faith as well as love, their lives ran side by side like an idyll of Arcadia, and they gave no thought to the storm that was gathering round them and was so soon to break, wrecking their happiness, and parting their lives awhile.

At last, towards the end of the fourth year after his coming to Constantinople—the year of the great comet which, with long fiery tail sweeping to the north, had terrorised the superstitious for twenty days—Rhesus began to have forebodings, and to wish that he dare go back to his father's house in distant Sicily. But he dared not, so cold had been the only letter he had received since his leaving, and he saw that he must stay and face the danger. And the risk was not slight.

The power of the Emperor over public order was fast diminishing, robbery and violence ruled the night, and rioting was of daily occurrence, the weight of the taxes enforced by the unscrupulous minister, John of Cappadocia, bled the people to poverty, the fury of the rival factions revived and grew to madness, and outside the empire, Persia in the east and the Vandals in the west, menaced its existence.

And one night, as Rhesus and his friend were returning home—it was the festival of the Twelfth Night—they learnt that treachery and treason were afoot in high quarters, and that their own lives were in imminent peril.

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CHAPTER IV.

Under the Convent Wall.

Seeking the shelter of the shadows on their homeward way, the two friends were passing under the shade of the buttressed wall of the Convent of St. Conan, when Proclus, who was leading, put out his hand to stop the other and whispered:

"Stay! There are figures lurking in the gloom over there."

Rhesus joined him, and saw distinctly three forms, one dressed as a priest, behind a mullioned buttress not a dozen paces off. These did not known they were seen, for the moonlight was at the back of the watchers, and shone dimly reflected, from the polished marble of a house across the deserted street, upon them.

"Do you know any of them, Rhesus?" asked Proclus, in a low whisper of expectation.

"Pallas and Venus! that I do!" answered the other, in as low a tone, as they flattened themselves against the wall, and slowly, taking steps sideways, moved forward without noise.

"That I do! One I can tell by his height and build to be Hermiot, who owes me a grudge for the thrashing I gave him; and the face of the second is the face of none other than our friend Marcen. As to the other, the priest, I know him not. Those two together are enough to make one feel that mischief is afloat!"

"Do you not know the third?" asked Proclus.

"By my faith, no."

"'Tis strange, my doughty charioteer. I knew him at once, despite his clumsily-worn mandyas and cowl. 'Tis Hypatius, nephew of Anastasius, who was emperor before Justin. He favours our faction, but will pander to either or both to gain influence to help him to the purple. Let us listen; we must hear this pretty plot."

"Stay! There are figures lurking in the gloom over there."

By this time they had gained the other side of the stonework behind which the three stood, and every word was distinctly audible. Keeping silent as the grave, each with hand on sword, they waited, listening.

"Are you sure that we are at last alone and unwatched, Marcen?" asked Hypatius. "Methought I heard footsteps near."

"A plague on your fancies!" returned Marcen. "I am risking more than either of you, and I am willing to take the risk of being overheard. Proceed."

"Yes, proceed," said Hermiot. "If we are to act at all we must act quickly, if your friends, Marcen, should discover your contemplated change of colour. What will you promise us, Hypatius, if we raise the city in revolt against the Emperor and his unpopular ministers, and make you Emperor in his place?"

"What have I said?" asked Hypatius. "If you can do this—and you are both powerful—I will promise you almost anything. One of you shall be my chief general, the other my chief minister, after we have dethroned this upstart Dacian and his circus wife, and these two obnoxious ministers. But can you do this, think you, and yet take no account of Belisarius in your plans?"

"That is the question," said Hermiot. "He is a man of infinite resources, of unaccountable loyalty, and one who cannot be bought. With the gold you speak of, I will wager to buy the city, even to Procopius, his secretary, but Belisarius I could not."

"Then we must silence him in the way I mentioned," said Marcen. "Then there will be no more fear."

"Yet it seems hard," mused Hermiot, with a soldier's instinct. "He is a brave and true man, and Byzantium will feel his loss when the Persians and Sythians come."

"You grow sentimental," sneered Hypatius. "However, that is no matter. He must be removed. If not, you will not gain the guerdon you have hinted at as the price of your assistance to my scheme. He must go."

"As you will, then," returned the other. "And now for the details, and the whereabouts of this vast treasure which was buried and which you alone have found."

"Will you swear to me, by the holiest vows of the Church, that you will keep the knowledge secret; that you will not pilfer the store prematurely?" asked Hypatius doubtingly. "It is a treasure of such vastness that it will make your mouths water at the sight of it, so I have taken care to have my armed spies on watch at the place from whence access is obtained to it. Yet why should I tell you at all? Is not the word of the nephew of Anastasius enough?"

"No more than ours is enough," replied Marcen coldly

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He seized the unsuspecting man round the waist.

"If we help you at all, we must know that you can redeem your promise, if we take oaths on our part, you must let us see this gold with our own eyes. Say you not so, Hermiot?"

His companion assented, and in the brief silence that followed, Rhesus gripped his friend's hand tightly. Then the claimant to the throne went on:

"As you will. But first let me review the items of our plan so that we may understand each other fully; we may not have the chance to meet together without suspicion or hindrance before the day of the games. You, Marcen, will openly change your green badge for a blue one, and with the gold I shall give you, will buy over as many of your chief men as you can to the same change, hinting secretly that another Emperor may ere long be master of Eastern Rome. You, Hermiot, will sow the seeds of discontent amongst your party with the same means, working on the public dislike of the taxes, and in my name, when the day is near, you can promise anything. The fulfilment of such promises may be left to its own time. You will also have filled the palace with our paid revolutionaries, and put this foolish Belisarius out of the way—the waters of the Bosphorus run deep—by the ides of January, and if you are the men I take you for, the result is assured. I shall appear in the hippodrome with a band of armed followers, drag this Justinian from his seat, clothe myself in his purple, and trust to lavish gold and promises to catch the fancy of the crowd and of the hour. The greens will welcome the overthrow of one who favours their enemies, and the blues, knowing through you, Hermiot, that I favour them, will make no resistance. What the thunders of the hippodrome proclaim one day, the city will echo the next, and then, *Nika!* Wealth and wine and women for my friends; sword and noose and river for my foes!"

"And fame for me and for our armies!" said Hermiot with a soldier's enthusiasm.

"And power, and the fair one I desire!" said Marcen, "and the overthrow of that country youth, Rhesus, who thinks so much of himself and is so fond of airing his pagan notions. Neither he nor his keen-tongued friend will have time to sort themselves when once I get the reins of office in my hands. But this gold of yours, Hypatius—this gold on which success depends?"

"Is under your feet," said the rebel, "in the Hall of Waters."

The two plotters visibly started at that, and Proclus scarcely refrained from uttering a cry of surprise. Said the younger gladiator:

"It is in a safe place then, but a perilous one. Can you lead us to it now?"

"Assuredly, but one only at a time. You, Hermiot, must remain here to watch whilst I and Marcen go. The secret entrance to the flooded catacombs is not far from here. Then Marcen can watch whilst I take you. To be spied upon may mean death. Come, Marcen."

Rhesus would have started forward in pursuit then, but Proclus held him back.

"Wait," he whispered. "We must deal with Hermiot first."

As the pair of traitors disappeared round an angle in the frowning wall, Hermiot came out from the gloom and looked about him. Seeing that the road was clear, he retreated once more to the shadow and leant upon the buttress so near to the others that they could have touched him by reaching out their hands.

"Now—quick!" cried Proclus, "seize and bind the wretch before he can give the alarm! quick!"

And suiting the action to the word he sprang out, seized the unsuspecting man round the waist, and hurled him to the ground. Rhesus was ready with his green sash, which he wound tightly over the prisoner's mouth and eyes while Proclus held him; then they pinioned his arms behind his back, and raised him to his feet again, despite his struggles.

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Having wound another fold of cloth from his own garments round his feet, they left Hermiot and drew off where they could speak freely.

"It seems to me," said Proclus, "that we have here an excellent chance of one of two things. We can either make an end of this prisoner of ours and meet the others boldly when they return, telling them we know all, and will join them in the plot on condition that Hypatius openly favours our faction and entrusts the secret of his treasure to us, or we can go to Belisarius and give him word of the scheme and then, when the plotters are taken, go over to the blue faction and reap the advantages of our loyalty. We can either have a new Emperor predisposed in our favour, or we can gain the goodwill of Justinian, or what is better, the approval of Theodora herself. Which say you, friend Rhesus?"

"I say," returned he hotly "that I will neither go back upon my friends nor lift a finger to help a weak-kneed, cunning, revengeful wretch like Hypatius upon the throne. I am no favourer of Justinian, as you know, but I prefer an open antagonist to a treacherous partizan."

"I am with you," answered Proclus, "but what shall we do? Would you see Belisarius assassinated—the only man in Constantinople, besides yourself, for whom I have any respect—for want of a word? And are you prepared to risk the loss of your Eutasia to this Marcen—for it was she whom he meant when he spoke of his reward—and perhaps the loss of your life as well? I have no mind, for all the tenets of the Stoics, to end my days just yet!"

"I think I see a way," replied Rhesus. "A better way than turning common murderers and slaying them all. You are about the same height and build as this fellow, and if you pulled the cloak a little closer round your face and exchanged your green sash for his blue one, I don't think the others would know you in this light. If they do not, you can take his place and find where this wealth is, and the rest will be easy. Belisarius can be warned secretly, and when we have removed the gold to a hiding-place of our own, *we* shall hold the destiny of the empire in our hands."

"You are growing as cunning as the most experienced court spy," said Proclus admiringly. "But what shall we do with Hermiot?"

"He does not know us; he can divulge nothing," said Rhesus. "We will leave him where he is. Do you take his place now and play your part well, and we shall call this adventure a lucky one. Hasten, I hear someone coming!"

He hurriedly slipped the blue sash from the prisoner, and Proclus wound it round him and took up Hermiot's position, whilst Rhesus shrank back into the shadow and crouched there over the captive, dagger in hand. The oncomers were only a party of drunken revellers reeling home—with more than one severely-garbed monk amongst them—and the two breathed more freely, yet scarcely were they lost to view than the two conspirators came in sight, and with due caution, rejoined Proclus. He played the part of Hermiot well, and presently Rhesus saw him depart with Hypatius, Marcen remaining behind.

The watcher kept absolutely still, though his limbs were cold with the cramped position, not daring to move now the moonlight was growing clearer, and he caught several words that Marcen muttered to himself.

"*Jesu Christi!* It is the ransom of a king! If it were all mine! And why not? only those three know of it—could get rid of them all on the day of the games—and then there would be pretty, wilful Eutasia for my own, if she *has* rejected me—the little witch! if she *has* preferred that callow youth Rhesus."

He relapsed into reverie, and all was still again.

After a spell of silence Marcen suddenly drew his body erect and took a step forward, muttering again. Letting his blade rest on his captive's cheek to keep before him the necessity of silence, Rhesus leant forward, straining his ears to listen, and what he heard altered all his plans at once.

"Why not now; why delay? There could be no safer way; none more certain—and then the gold will be mine—and Eustasia—and—who knows?—perchance the purple robe and the crown. It only needs the barring of a door."

And as Rhesus started forward, Marcen stole softly but swiftly out of the shadow into the light, and then into the shadow again round the angle of the wall where the others had disappeared, and for a moment there shone the gleam of a dagger in his hand.

Rhesus had no time for reflection, his friend was in the Hall of Waters, in the guise of Hermiot, with the pre-

He fumbled with his fingers upon a little postern door.

tender: and this traitor was going to bar their way out and leave them there to die.

Thinking no more of the real Hermiot, who lay quite still, he, too, ran lightly and quickly round the buttress and under the frowning masonry as close behind the dim figure of Marcen as he safely could, and presently was pursuing him through the gloom of a narrow avenue between two high walls. At the further end of this ghostly avenue he stopped and fumbled with his fingers upon a little postern door set deeply in an embrasure of rough stone. Rhesus was behind, and quite close to him, as the door sprang back and he stepped into the inky darkness beyond.

(To be continued.)

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THE DOOR-KNOB.

WE came down from Circle City in December, because we were afraid of the climate.

We didn't care to face the keen winds that whistle about early in the year. Besides, we'd enough gold to last our time, if we were careful. Albert had his bag of nuggets packed with paper between them, and I had a trunk of them so heavy that I couldn't carry it. We drew our load on sledges.

It wasn't exactly safe to travel down from Circle City to the coast with your nuggets spread out like that, but Albert and I bundled the n up in rags as though they were cooking utensils and started out.

We were only going about fifteen miles together; on the other side of the plateau we were to separate and go our own ways.

I shall never forget how reluctantly we shook hands at the further end of the plateau; we were loth to part now that the minute had come for it. I remember we shook hands twice for the last time.

Scarcely had he gone fifty feet when I heard him shout:

"Remember, old boy, that you are to take the first right-hand path. Go along until you see a log-house up on the cliff, and then make a bee line for it. You're safe there."

Iceberg Inn was a resort well known to miners. It was kept by an old couple who tried their luck in the goldfields, but gave up to start the remunerative business of treating the miners well as they journeyed to and fro. As a half-way house Iceberg Inn was well known, and to its portals I was bound, for here could be found shelter and safety.

I could scarcely have gone the two miles when I was agreeably surprised to see the inn looming up on a cliff before me. It was a much shorter distance than Albert had given me to understand, but there it was with its rude front and its little windows nearly hidden behind the brushwood and trees that sheltered it from the north wind.

With a sigh of thankfulness I turned my sledge into the path that wound westward to the house, and began the work of pulling it steadily along the narrow way.

To my surprise, for Al had told me many tales of the hospitality of the inn, no one came out to welcome me; but I trudged on, thinking mine host of the inn must be asleep. As I drew nearer I was surprised to see all the shutters closed, and, although it was dark, not a light shone from any of the windows.

I stopped boldly up to the door and knocked.

No answer came, but from above there was a creaking sound of a shutter thrown open.

"Is this Iceberg Inn?" I called out.

For answer the voice at the window asked: "How many of you are there?"

"Only one man, but very tired and hungry. Come, hurry down and let me in."

There was a clattering sound, and in a minute the door was pulled cautiously open. Behind it stood an old man, and farther back crouched an old woman, a pistol in her hand.

"Don't shoot yet," I laughed, stepping into the room and hauling my hand sledge in after me, "because I've heard of you and I know enough to expect better treatment."

Still laughing I pulled off my coat and threw it on the floor, the old man meanwhile closing and carefully relocking the door.

"What do ye want?" he asked sourly.

"Want! Why I want to stay all night, the same as all the others have done, and perhaps a day or two longer."

The old couple looked at each other. "Suppose we let him," said the old woman, "but he'll have ter take things as he finds 'em."

That I had made a mistake in the place was now evident to me, but as the fire was warm within and the night bitter and cold without, I thought it best to stay. The house was safe enough—of that I had little doubt—and as for the feeble old couple, I had little to fear from them.

While I was engaged in my meditations and pulling off my heavy over-boots and wrappings, the old woman disappeared, leaving the old man to assist me.

"We can give ye supper and a bed; an' I don't suppose ye'll want any more than that," he said.

"Oh, no," I responded cheerfully, "and don't put yourself to any trouble. I'm used to roughing it."

At that moment the old woman reappeared and beckoned me into the kitchen. There upon the table, as though she had been expecting a guest, lay a plate, a dark-handled knife and fork and a cup.

"I see ye coming," said she, "an' I know'd ye was coming here, the same as all the others."

The expression "same as all the others" as she uttered it, grated upon me, though I could not tell why.

As I finished eating, I leant back in my chair and took out a small pocket mirror. Lifting it to my eyes, to take a survey of my face, I was surprised to see in its reflection the old couple bending over something in the front room; and turning the glass the better to see, I was astonished to find that it was my sledge. They

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were examining it. They had pulled off its coverings and were bending over the leather trunk, tapping it with anxious fingers and listening as they tapped.

"Ho, ho," I said to myself, pocketing the glass, "I shall have to watch this old couple, as well as guard against outsiders."

At the first sound they rose quickly, and the old man stepped to the door with a candle. "Suppose ye'll want to go to bed pretty early," he said; "wife an' I made the room ready for yer."

As he spoke he pointed up a dark, narrow, ladder-like staircase, which evidently led to my sleeping quarters up above.

"Thanks," said I, "I will turn in now; and, by the way," I added, as if it were an afterthought, "I will take my trunk up with me. I've got some things in it that I may want."

At this the old couple looked at each other.

"I'll unpack 'em fer yer," said the old dame quickly, "but I wouldn't take it up if I wuz you; the stairs is too narrow."

And too narrow they were. At first I tried to lift it on my shoulder. But I could not get though the low doorway, and finally giving it up, I rolled it end over end up the stairs, the old couple eyeing me evilly all the while.

"I am up safe," I called out, as, breathless, I arrived with it at the top of the stairs; "and as I see my room ahead of me, I will not trouble you any further to-night."

A minute later I was inside of the small square room, which occupied apparently the entire upper floor, and had bolted the door behind me.

The room, as I took a quick survey of it by the light of the open shutter, was a square one, devoid of furniture except a rude bedstead and one chair. There was no provision for washing in the morning, nor, that I could see, was there a lamp or candle.

I felt in my baggage for a candle, but the last piece was gone.

"I'll have to venture down," I said to myself, "for I don't propose to be without a light."

As I stepped to the narrow staircase, some instinct prompted me to go quietly. I crept down the stairs one by one until I stood on a level with the sitting-room.

There seated comfortably at a table in the middle of the floor were the old couple. A lamp was between them. As I paused to take a survey of them, I heard the old woman say:

"Did ye change the door-knob?"

"No; he got upstairs too quick for me."

A sound made the old woman turn round.

"What do ye want?" she snapped at me.

"Could you give me a light?" I said.

"Certainly," said she, springing to her feet; "an' I'll take it up fer ye."

She sprang up the staircase in front of me, showing remarkable agility for one so feeble; and by the time I had regained the top she was coming out of my room, while within flickered the light of a sputtering candle.

A few minutes later, with bolted door, I sat in my little quarters looking round. That there was a rough night before me I felt pretty certain; but how, and in what form, the trouble would come, I could only conjecture.

At this instant my eye chanced to fall upon the door-knob, and for a minute I sat and gazed at it in wonder. I could have sworn that it had moved. No, there it was, secure in its panel, with the bolt drawn below it.

I stepped over to inspect it. There was a whispering sound, and, bending my ear, I was positive it came from the next panel.

There was evidently a watch upon my movements.

I walked noisily to the table and blew out the candle. Then I crept back to the door, and silently turning the knob, I threw the door open, expecting to stand face to face with the old couple.

To my surprise a rush of air swept into the room, almost wresting the door-knob from my fingers. Cautiously peering out, I was horrified to see below me, not the winding staircase, but a steep cliff with an abyss below.

The whole thing was plain to me at once.

The house stood upon a bluff over the cliff, with the second story projecting slightly over the first. By opening this, the false door, I should walk out into space, and be dashed to pieces on the rocks three hundred feet below, leaving my trunk and bag of nuggets in the hands of the rascally old couple. A more fiendish scheme had never been devised even in this region of lawlessness.

But how had the door-knob been changed?

Undoubtedly during my absence downstairs, when the old woman had preceded me to my room. I felt softly along the wall. Yes, there was the hole out of which the old knob had been screwed. This hole then was in the real door—and behind it mine host and hostess were listening.

In an instant my mind was made up. I must pretend to fall.

Lifting my trunk to my shoulder I carried it softly to the false door, then fumbling at the knob, I opened it noisily, and in a minute my precious trunk went crashing to the rocks below. I counted, and it was nearly a minute before I heard it strike. Then it went bounding and bounding downward.

"Safer there than here," I thought.

Scarcely had I time to put my hand upon my pistol than I heard a prying in the wall, and in a second a hand came through and slid back the bolt. Then the door opened.

"He opened it sooner than we thought," cackled the old woman.

"Yes, his fine quarters didn't suit him. Wanted ter ask for something better, I expect."

He got no further, for with the butt of my pistol I felled him to the floor.

With a shriek the old woman bounded upon me, but I sprang past her and down the stairs, taking them at a jump.

At the door I fumbled a minute with the lock, and she was nearly upon me again, but I escaped into the night bareheaded and breathless, but without the stain of woman's blood upon my hands.

It was noon the next day before I overtook Al on the other side of the plateau, for I had to retrace my path of the night before; but worn and spent, I staggered into Camp Brill as he was leaving.

They act hastily Klondyke way, and by night, with teams and rifles, we were back for a raid upon the inn, only to find our old birds had flown. Whither, we knew not.

But we got the treasure all right, lowering each other by ropes to the rocks below until the nuggets by actual count were all found.

But it will be many a day before I forget that night on the cliff.

LOUIS ALDEN.

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Reading His Character.

"WELL, I must say good night, I suppose, Susie?"

"Good night, Ned!" she said, promptly holding out her hand.

"Oh, I say!" shaking it forlornly, "aren't you going to tell me it isn't late, or something like that?"

Susie coolly walked towards the door, while she theorised aloud.

"What a lot of character there is in hands, even in the way they shake!"

"You may be sure of that! When they shake it's a pretty bad case of boo——!"

"Ned, please don't be vulgar! You know exactly what I mean. I have been studying hands lately, and——"

"Whose hands?"

"And I find they are very reliable guides to character. The way you shake hands shows you to be nervous, self-willed, irritable and obstinate."

"Great Scott! Susie, I am nothing of the sort!"

"Oh, there is no use denying it. When one has studied palmistry——"

"Palmistry! What nonsense! Why, Susie, you are too pretty to take up that fad."

"Pretty! What has that to do with it?"

"Everything. It is generally the homely and antiquated girls who study it."

"How absurd! Why not the pretty ones study the science?"

He, seeing a grand chance of prolonging his stay, sat down again, and said doggedly:

"Don't call it a science. What's the use of learning the stuff?"

"Why, wouldn't you like to know a good hand when you see it?"

"I do, and I can play it well. If you could teach me to know a good hand when I couldn't see it, the lesson would prove of value."

"It's no use talking to you, I see."

"Oh, yes, it is. Come, tell me all about the mysterious science. How do you go to work? Do you have to have a photograph of the hand?"

"Photograph? No. I study the hand itself. I hold it so that a good light——"

"You hold it, do you? Susie, read my hand, won't you, please?"

He opened that strong, white member, and placed it alluringly, palm upward, under the rays of the lamp.

"I hardly like to. You don't believe in it."

"A fine chance, then, for you to make a convert of me by reading my character correctly."

She sat down and took his hand. It trembled a little in her clasp, but she did not notice it because she was saying, smilingly:

"We have been friends so long that I think I must know your character pretty thoroughly already."

"This is the opportunity of your life, then, to find out a few things you didn't suspect?"

"Oh, Ned! Here's a terrible sign!"

"What's the matter?"

"Your palm is longer than your fingers."

"Doesn't hurt, I assure you."

"It does! It hurts dreadfully! It is a sign of brutality."

"Get a better light on it," he urged, edging up closer.

"But there is a slightly counteracting value in the largeness of the thumb, and in the unlined mount of Mars."

"You don't say so? What does all this show?"

"That you can keep command of yourself, even under great provocation."

"Well, that's true, at all events," he muttered between his teeth, and the strong hand trembled.

"Dear, dear, dear!"

"What is it now?"

"Obstinacy and bad temper."

"Where?"

"In the broad part of your thumb."

"Well, so long as I keep them there, no harm's done."

"Let me look at the quadrangle. Oh, good! It's nice, broad, smooth and well defined. That means loyalty, Ned; the noblest quality a man can have. I am so glad you have it!"

In her pretty earnestness she clasped his hand in both of hers and talked deliciously straight into his eyes.

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Passionate words rushed to his lips, but before he had a chance to speak them she gave a little scream of dismay and turned the back of his hand to the light.

"Look at that!" she commanded. "Fickleness!"

"What shows it?"

"That," pointing with dainty horror to the few remaining hairs.

"Why, Susie, that doesn't mean anything at all. All men's hands are like that."

"It simply proves what I say. All men are fickle. I thought you might be an exception. But you are not."

"Go on," he said resignedly, turning his palm again to the light.

"Do you see that? That means conjugal misery, and lots of it, because it's a long, long line."

With interested pity she traced it with her soft forefinger, and the caressing touch sent an answering thrill from his toes to his hair roots.

"Do that again," he whispered, "that's perfectly delicious!"

"Delicious? A life of conjugal misery?"

"Deplorable. Perfectly deplorable. But do it again, to be sure you haven't made a mistake."

"No mistake; and if I read things twice I'll never be finished. Aunt Mary will be calling to me from over the banisters. Where was I? Oh, yes. Here's another long one—the line of the heart. That means jealousy of the most pronounced and unreasoning type."

"Look here, Susie, if there is a particle of good in my hand, I wish you would make a strong effort to find it.

"But that scream shows that you have found another unfavourable sign. What is it this time?"

"Do you see this bump? It's the mount of the moon. See the cross on it? That means—I hate to say it, Ned, but I must—it means that you are a l—that you tell lies, Ned!"

"I do not!"

"Oh you must! I believe now that it was you who sent those lovely flowers, though you swore not. Now didn't you?"

"Why—why——"

"And I firmly believe it was you gave all my poor people money, though when asked about it you said that you wouldn't give beggars a 'brass farthing'—those were your very words. I see by your face that I am right. Oh, it makes me miserable to find that you fib. Why did you?"

"Because you would think me generous and thank me for it, when I was giving simply for your sake, for your dear——"

"Turn your hand over. I haven't half finished. Let me look for generosity. Yes, here it is in the triangle; but it's too large and shows audacity. And you have an island on the line of Saturn."

"Have I? What a possession! The only real estate I own."

"Don't be silly. An island is a loop, like this," and she drew a warm little ellipse on his palm. That was too much to stand; his hand closed passionately over the sybil's.

"Oh, don't, Ned! You interrupt in the most interesting part——"

"This is going to be very interesting, too," he promised.

"For that island means a hopeless, untold passion."

"It may be hopeless, but it shall not be untold. You saw many things in my hands, Susie, but you seem to have missed the only thing worth seeing—love. Love for you, little girl! Did you see it?"

"N—no, Ned. Besides, palmistry isn't fortune telling, it's character reading."

"But the only character I have is built upon my love for you. There, I have you in my arms now. Don't try to get away, you cannot. Did you see in my hand, darling, that we love each other and are going to get married? Oh, please be kind when you answer."

"I—I saw something about conjugal misery, Ned," laughing and crying hysterically.

"But you saw loyalty, too. And that is true. As sure as there is a Heaven I will be loyal to you! I am poor, and have nothing to offer but that and love. Will you trust to them, little girl?"

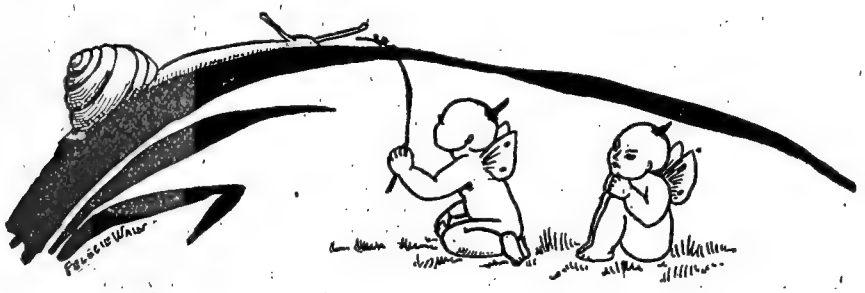
"Y—y—yes."

It was the merest whisper, but it was enough, and wafted them both out upon a sea of rapturous silence.

Finally she drew herself away, and with the charming perversity of a woman, who always belies her mood by her action, suggestively jammed his hat upon his head.

"Yes, little girl, I'm going. And you have converted me, after all. I now believe in palmistry—there's a great deal in it."

ALICE GARDINER.



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HER MOTHER'S DRESS.

THE sunshine was streaming into the rectory windows, where Ida Lynn's geraniums drank in its brightness, and Lilian Grove, from the great house on the hill, could not but own to herself that "love in a cottage" could be very beautiful.

Miss Grove was a belle, a petted favourite in society, and the rector's daughter was only a blue-eyed, simple-hearted little lass of eighteen.

The rector's daughter sat at her desk nibbling her penholder. She looked up in a second, smiling and gracious.

"Always busy," said Miss Grove. "I don't understand how you manage it."

"Oh, Lilian! I am so glad to see you," cried Ida. "I was just contriving about the charities for the poor."

"The poor," repeated Lilian. "I am tired of hearing of the poor. It seems to me that they are always wanting something."

"A very natural state of things, as you would soon find out if you were poor yourself," laughed Ida. "Oh, Lily, if I were only as rich as you!"

"What would you do?" inquired the heiress, yawning.

"I would give all the poor people something to make their hearts glad on the church dedication day; but I have only five shillings left after the household expenses are paid," she added with a sigh.

"How much would it take?" asked Miss Grove.

Ida's eyes brightened in anticipation of coming largesse.

"Ten pounds would be more than enough," she answered.

"I know how you can get it," said Lilian, surveying a tiny rip in her lavender kid glove.

"How?"

"I will give you ten pounds for that old lilac and silver brocade dress that was your mother's. I have taken a fancy to it. I want to have it made up again to wear to Mrs. Hawke's party."

"My only silk dress—the dress that mamma wore on her wedding-day! Oh, Lilian!" she uttered rather incoherently. "And I was going to wear it myself!"

And in the same second she remembered that Henry Mount was to be at the Hawkes' party.

"Oh!" said Miss Grove, "I thought you were really anxious about these people. And as I fancied the dress——"

"Stop, please, a minute, and let me think," pleaded Ida.

Was this all the benefit she had gained from her Bible studies, her father's sermons, her daily prayers? The dress was not honestly worth that amount, but if it pleased Lilian, there was nothing unfair about selling it. The trouble was that she had no other dress fit for the party, and no money to buy one—and she could not spend any of the ten pounds on herself, when she had said she wanted the money for the poor. And it was her mother's.

"I—I did not reflect. Yes, Lilian, you may have the dress."

"I should like it," said Lilian Grove. "And you are so young and so deliciously blonde, dear, that white muslin would be the very thing for you to wear. Get some——"

"You forget, Lilian," said Ida, with a faint smile, "that there are six children of us, and a new dress is by no means the every-day affair in our household that you seem to imagine it. Shall I get the dress at once?"

* * * * *

"But I thought little Ida Lynn was to be here, Susy?"

Mr. Mount eyed the gay assemblage over the plump, white shoulders of his married sister, the hostess.

"I am sure I invited her," said Mrs. Hawke carelessly. "I cannot compel people to come."

"Did she know I was to be here?"

"Of course, I told her so myself."

"It's very strange," said Mount reflectively. "I'd no idea she would try to avoid me. Why," with a start and a stare, "that is the very lilac and silver brocade that used to be in the old chest at the rectory garret when we were children. I can swear to it!" as the glistening ball dress floated past him in the waltz; "and how the dickens has that Grove girl managed to get hold of it?"

"I can tell you," said Miss Price. "I know how it happened, Mr. Mount. She bought it of Ida Lynn for ten pounds, and Ida isn't here just because she hadn't anything to wear, poor thing!"

"But—I beg your pardon, Miss Price, but all this is so incomprehensible to me. What could Miss Lynn want with ten pounds?"

"Why, that's the very cream of the story," said Miss Price. "I do think, Mr. Mount, that if Heaven lets angels walk about this every-day world, Ida Lynn is one! She wanted a little money to give presents to the poor folks that nobody thinks of or remembers; she remembers everyone, bless her dear heart; and so she sold her mother's dress to Lilian Grove."

"Lilian Grove would buy the eyes out of your head if she chose to take a fancy to them, and never thinks you have any feelings that money can't salve; and—why, dear me—where has that fellow vanished to? That's modern manners, is it? Humph!"

The second quadrille had hardly commenced in the stately rooms of the Hawke mansion, and little Ida Lynn had hardly turned the third page of her book, when Harry, her young brother, bounced into the room.

"Cinderella!" he cried. "Cinderella! The fairy prince is coming!"

"What on earth do you mean, Harry?" said Ida, looking up in surprise. But before he could answer Mr. Henry Mount stood before her, in full evening dress.

"I'm tired of Hawke House, Ida," said he, "and you shall be my party to-night."

When the rector, bald, benevolent, and near-sighted, came stumbling out of his study at ten o'clock, he found Ida looking into the fire, with carmine cheeks and eyes like glistening stars.

"Papa," said she, "I am very happy! Mr. Mount has asked me to marry him—and he is coming to see you to-morrow."

WINIFRED WOOD.

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The Professor's Joke.

"Well," began Harrowby, laying down his cigar and looking through the window at the rain that was falling in torrents, "did you ever know such weather? Did you ever see such a—such a—No, I won't say it!" And he picked up his cigar and threw himself into a chair.

"Isn't it raining?" asked Marsden, presumably for want of something to say.

"Of course it is," returned Welton savagely. "That's ancient history now, seeing that this is the fourth day we haven't been able to stir outside the door. Fine lot of sketches I shall get out of this trip!"

We four had been college chums. We had chosen different professions and had not seen much of one another since those days, but this year we had arranged to spend our holiday together as a treat. It was Marsden's idea, and we had succeeded in carrying out the arrangement. But we had scarcely got into our holiday quarters ere the rain began, and it didn't look like ceasing for a month.

Welton was an artist, Marsden a civil engineer and Harrowby a surgeon. All three had made a mark in their professions, but Harrowby was far ahead of us all, his studies in brain physiology and other kindred subjects having made quite a stir. I need not mention myself.

We were tired of card playing and various other methods of passing the time, so Marsden proposed story-telling, and set the example by relating how a bridge fell down just as he was about to test it—or after he had pronounced it quite safe, I forget which. It wasn't an exciting yarn. Then Welton told us how one of his pictures had been stolen—by some bad judge of art, I said. Then I told a very original incident about being nearly murdered and robbed in an inn on the Continent. But even that fell flat.

Then it was Harrowby's turn.

"I did have one exciting adventure in my early days," he remarked after a pause. "I have never mentioned it, because it makes me feel nervous even now. But I'll tell you about it as it's my turn."

He puffed away for about half a minute and then began.

"You know that I went to Leipsic to complete my studies under the great Sirdoff. I was provided with letters of introduction from some of the best men in London, and I did not lose any time in presenting myself to the great specialist. You can imagine that I was anxious to make the acquaintance of so celebrated a man.

"He was a man about seventy, white-haired, venerable, and with a look of gentle serenity on his face. He was quite benevolent in appearance; just the man you would trust at once and without hesitation."

"Died some few years ago, didn't he?" remarked Marsden, with his usual knowing shake of the head.

"He received me very kindly," continued Harrowby, paying no heed to the question. "I was soon at my ease and talking quite freely to him about my experiments. He seemed rather surprised at the extent of those experiments, and made many inquiries. I went back to my lodgings on very good terms with myself.

"For the next six months I worked steadily at my studies in brain physiology and other things, which you gentlemen don't know anything about, and, with the help of Professor Sirdoff, I made splendid progress.

"In my spare moments I continued my researches in connection with the medulla oblongata and its functions. That's the substance that connects the spinal cord with the brain. I had taken up that subject as a kind of hobby, but the more I went into it, the more convinced did I become that the current ideas were altogether erroneous. That was an irresistible inducement to go on.

"I did not mention this to Sirdoff, fearing that he might smile at my presumption. But one day I was so preoccupied with a fresh experiment that I had half completed before visiting him, that he asked me whether anything was wrong. That led to my explaining what I had been doing.

"'No, Professor, there is nothing wrong,' I replied. 'but I was puzzling over an experiment. Some researches I have been making recently concerning the medulla oblongata, Professor,' I added in a sudden burst of confidence.

"He staggered as though struck, and I stepped forward to help him.

"'It is nothing,' he said, recovering himself quickly. 'It is a spasm. I suffer from my heart and sometimes swoon. But let me hear about your researches; have you done much?'

"I was quite grieved to think that he should suffer from an affection of the heart, and apparently a serious one, and was about to express my anxiety when he asked me—somewhat irritably I thought—to tell him about my investigations.

"I told him briefly what I had done. He seemed to take extraordinary interest in the work, and said that he must come to my rooms and see my laboratory—he might be able to help me.

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"A few weeks passed away and my researches had become absorbing. I felt that I was on the verge of a great discovery. I suppose it was my demeanour that made Sirdoff ask me how I was getting on. We had spoken very little on the subject and he had not paid his promised visit.

"'I must come and see you,' he said, without waiting for my reply. 'Will this evening be convenient? Very well. I will be with you at seven o'clock.'

"I was delighted, and intended to make grand preparations; but in my feverish anxiety I quite forgot all about it.

"It was autumn. I had worked until about five o'clock, but had not achieved the result for which I hoped. I was sitting in a chair, running through the notes I had made, when suddenly a modification of one experiment flashed across my mind. I jumped up as though I had received an electric shock, and went to work again.

"I usually make notes of all that I do. I write them out roughly on separate slips as I go on, and when the experiment is finished I make a fair copy of the formulæ in a little note-book. At that time I was using two note-books, one for the medulla, another for general things. I mention this, as it is important.

"I set to work again, and this time I was successful! I drew a long breath and pinched myself to see if I were really awake. Yes, it was true, and I had made a wonderful discovery! I was trembling to such an extent that I could scarcely make my usual notes.

"At the moment I heard the clock strike seven, and before I had recovered from my surprise at the flight of time, there came a knock at the door of my laboratory.

"I opened it, and beheld Sirdoff. The servant had told him that I was at the top of the house, in my laboratory, and he had found his way to it by a sort of instinct.

"'You look excited, my friend,' he remarked. 'What is it?'

"I took him gently by the arm and led him in, picturing to myself the old man's pleasure at my discovery. I did not tell him at once; I thought I would let him look about the place first.

"I had turned my back for a few seconds for some purpose, when I was startled by a hoarse cry. I turned and saw the Professor trembling like a leaf, his face as white as death. He was holding a sheet of paper. I rushed to his side.

"'My heart,' he gasped. 'The pain was dreadful just then!'

"I forced him into a chair and poured out some brandy, which, by good luck, I had in the room. He seemed better, but he declared that he must go home. I stated my intention of accompanying him, but he declined in the most positive fashion.

"'I will go alone,' he said decisively. 'You stop here; I can let myself out. It is my wish; I prefer it so.'

"Of course, I could not insist. He went out, and I heard him descending the stairs. Then I heard the street door shut.

"On the floor at my feet I noticed the sheet on which I had made my rough notes. I picked it up and proceeded to make a copy in my book.

"I slept very badly that night, owing to one thing and another. My discovery and its results disturbed my rest, I awoke with a start three or four times, and at last, out of patience, I determined to get up. I slipped on a dressing gown and went to my laboratory.

"Judge of my amazement on seeing a streak of light from under the door! I had a distinct recollection of having turned out the gas. Had I been walking in my sleep just before this?

"I put my hand on the handle of the door; it would not give. Someone was there and had shot the catch.

"I was about to throw myself against the door when it was opened quickly. Something dashed against me, knocking me over, and I heard the sound of a person tumbling rather than walking downstairs.

"I picked myself up and rushed after the intruder; but the front door was slammed before I reached the end of one flight of stairs.

"All the inmates were aroused. We searched the place, but nothing was missing, not even in my laboratory. I was thankful that I had taken all my notes into my bedroom. But what in the name of goodness did a thief expect to find in my laboratory?

"Early next morning came a kindly note from my master. He was not well enough to lecture, but he would be greatly pleased to see me at his house that afternoon. And he hoped that I would bring the notes I had made concerning my researches.

"I decided to accept the invitation, for I was anxious about his health and I wanted to tell him of my great discovery.

"I passed the morning in confirming the accuracy of my conclusions and found all was well. I was so excited that I ate scarcely any lunch, and I was half way on my journey to Professor Sirdoff's home before I discovered that I had actually forgotten the all-important note-book. I ran back, snatched it up from my experimenting table, placed it in my breast pocket for safety, and hurried off again.

"Sirdoff received me warmly. He looked pale and worn, but he said he was almost himself again. We were very soon talking about my researches, of course.

"'I have some news to tell you, Professor,' I said, hardly able to contain myself. 'I have discovered the true functions of the——'

"Crash! The glass which he was raising to his lips fell from his hand.

"I rang the bell for the servant, at his request. As I turned, I faced a mirror, and in that glass I saw the reflection of a face convulsed with malignant hatred. It was a sight such as I hope never to see again!

"I turned hurriedly, but the Professor was smiling blandly and benevolently. I began to think that my study had affected my brain.

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"'Let us go and smoke a cigar in my laboratory while the servant is removing the evidence of my clumsiness,' he said. 'Then you can tell me all about your wonderful discovery. For you know,' he added, 'so many have investigated that very point without result that it is just a little difficult to believe that you —so young—should have scored such a remarkable success.'

"I smiled in my pride as we descended a flight of stairs to the basement. The laboratory was in reality a cellar, which had been fitted up by Sirdoff for its present use. Everything was of the latest and most approved form; there were electric batteries of all sizes, instruments of——

"Never mind about the fitting," said Marsden. "Get on with the story."

"'You have brought your notes, I suppose?' inquired Sirdoff as we reached the door.

"'Yes, Professor,' I replied. 'You will find that the discovery is quite genuine when you read them.'

"We stepped inside, and I was surprised to notice that Sirdoff locked the door and put the key into his pocket. He showed me several of his treasures, and then, clapping me cordially on the shoulder, said:

"'Now, my dear boy, you shall sit upon this operating table and I will sit on this chair in front of you. You shall tell me what you have done. Up you go, that's it! Quite at home, as you say in your country, eh? Ha! ha! You look funny sitting up there!'

"I laughed too; but it seemed to me that there was something strained and unnatural about the Professor's laugh. I dismissed the idea; I put it down to fancy, and began to feel that I really had overworked myself and that my brain would suffer if I did not rest.

"'Let me see your note-book,' said Sirdoff.

"I handed it to him without a word. Hardly had I done so than I felt a shock and knew that a strong electric current was passing through me. All my strength was gone; I tried to struggle and cry out, but in vain.

"'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed the Professor as he threw the running noose of a cord round me and pinioned me. He had my arms and legs tied with surprising rapidity.

"I stared at him. What did it mean? Now I knew that my brain had not played me a trick; his face bore the same malignant expression that I had seen in the mirror.

"'Now, my young friend, you are aware that by pressing this knob I can send you into the next world—you are aware of that, eh? Well, that is what I am going to do with you! But first let me tell you why.'

"He switched off the current, and settled back in his chair.

"'You can listen more comfortably now,' he continued, with an evil smile. 'It's useless to shout; nobody will hear you. You baby-faced idiot! You English fool! Shall chance put into your hands the secret that I—*I*, Sirdoff!—have spent my life trying to discover? No! You shall never have the credit of that discovery! Can you guess who it was whom you surprised in your laboratory? Ha, ha! I wouldn't let you accompany me to the door! I shut the street door, but I was inside, and I stopped in the house till you were all in bed. You foiled me, and I arranged this little plan for getting possession of your notes.'

"He stopped for breath. What a demoniacal expression there was on his face. I could not help a slight shiver at the thought of the fate awaiting me. He saw the movement.

"'It is a pity that I have to kill you, but it cannot be helped,' he said. 'Had I obtained possession of your notes last night, your life would not have been sacrificed. I should have published the discovery as my own; had you claimed it, nobody would have believed you! Well, good-bye, my friend, I am about to press the knob.'

"I saw the movement of his hand and shut my eyes. It was all over with me.

"But something impelled him to open the note-book and look at what I had written before he completed his fiendish work. That saved my life. He read the notes eagerly at first; then he turned over the leaves and read here and there at random. Finally he put the book down, stood up and paced about the room.

"'You have discovered nothing!' he exclaimed in a tone of deep disappointment. 'Nothing! Your mind is wandering!'

"What did it all mean? I could not understand it; I was too bewildered. He cut the cord, and I jumped off the table, free once more.

"'You stood the test very well, my dear young friend,' he said with a smile. 'You must excuse an old man's joke. Ha, ha! Only a joke! Ha, ha!'

"I forced a laugh and said that I quite forgave him. I wanted to conciliate him till I could get away. As we went upstairs, I found out what had happened to the book. In my hurry, I had snatched up the wrong one.

"A few days later, I published my discovery. And on the day after its appearance, the newspapers announced that Professor Sirdoff had committed suicide."

G. Day.

Google

A MODERN CINDERELLA.

"Madame, would you mind if I accompanied François to his mother's home?"

"No; I am perfectly willing, but be back by eleven o'clock."

"Madame may be assured of that; we shall be here long before eleven. Pierre is downstairs, and if madame should need anything——"

"All right; you may go, Mariette, and remember eleven o'clock."

The Countess of Laispare had left her château in the neighbourhood of Compeigne, and, leaving all her servants with the exception of her maid, whom she took with her to Trouville, intended to stay a few weeks in Paris—long enough to see all that was new and interesting—and amuse herself with whatever offered in the way of novelty.

Mariette, her maid, was delighted with the idea of the short sojourn in Paris, for she could see her *fiancé*, a brother of the janitor of the apartment in which they were stopping.

The Countess of Laispare, a pretty widow, was a trifle fatigued by a day spent in going from tailor to dressmaker, from dressmaker to milliner; she was stretched comfortably in a reclining chair, and her whole attention, after her maid's departure, was centred in the book she was reading.

The book was intensely interesting and she read on until midnight without noticing how quickly time was passing. The sound of the clock striking twelve aroused her.

"Is it possible? I had no idea it was so late. And where is Mariette?"

Sure that her maid had not yet returned, she passed out on the little balcony from her drawing room and began looking vainly for the figures of Mariette and François.

After a short time, as they did not appear, she began to feel anxious and a little irritated. In her impatience she struck her foot repeatedly against the iron railing of the balcony. And at this moment the heel of her slipper caught in the ironwork, the slipper was pulled from her foot, and, falling, just escaped the face of a late pedestrian who stood star-gazing beneath the balcony.

He uttered a startled exclamation and, stooping in amazement, he picked up the object, looked at it, turned it over, then carrying it to the street lamp examined it carefully.

His surprised look gave way to one of amused pleasure. In fact, the slipper completely eclipsed the legendary one of Cinderella. It was small enough for the foot of a child and made of black satin, embroidered with gold. The passer, feeling like a prince in the story, knew at once that the wearer of the slipper had a pretty foot and that the next thing to do was to find her.

"Well," he said to himself, "let's begin. This slipper didn't fall on my head from the sky; it came evidently from that lighted window. I thought I saw a figure there a moment ago. Well, then, here goes."

Concealed in the corner of the balcony, the Countess had watched the pantomime, feeling all the time a strong desire to laugh. The man, in approaching the light, had given her a chance to observe him minutely.

He appeared young and good-looking; in dress and bearing he was all that could be desired. The young Countess thought he had a very distinguished appearance, and so she felt not at all alarmed when he approached the door of the building and rang the bell.

As no one responded the first time, a second followed it, and then a third, prolonged, energetic and loud, which met with no greater success than the first two.

"He will awaken everyone in the house except that sleepy-headed *concierge*. What shall I do? I don't see anything but to go and open it myself."

And, accepting her part boldly, the Countess descended the stairs, blaming Mariette severely for having put her

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in such a position. Opening the door a crack, she said:

"A thousand apologies, monsieur, and please give it to me quickly."

But such haste was entirely contrary to the plans of M. de la Brière, the man who held the slipper.

"In truth, madame, I regret exceedingly not being able to grant your request, but the object which I have just found, is, I think, rather precious, and you will understand that I feel a certain responsibility. If the slipper is yours, it will, of course, fit you. Will you allow me to assure myself by the formality of trying it on?"

"Your conscience, monsieur, has a very keen edge, but as you are not satisfied in seeing me standing here on one foot, I suppose I must submit to the proof you ask for."

She seated herself in one of the large antique chairs in the hall, and, putting out her little foot, watched him as he gravely fitted the slipper upon it.

The instant it was on, the foot was withdrawn, and disappeared beneath her skirt, while Réné de la Brière arose, somewhat disconcerted.

The Countess of Laispare, standing on both feet this time, made him the most gracious and at the same time the most ironical of bows, and, opening the door wide, motioned the young man out with a gesture in which grace did not hide authority.

But at the moment when, decidedly chagrined and confused, Réné was about to obey the command, a loud report was heard a little distance from them.

The Countess, forgetting that it was the eve of July 14th, a day which all Paris celebrates with every kind of demonstration, thought only of the pistol shot and robbers.

Remembering that she was alone, she grew frightened and wished to keep with her the stranger whom she had already impressively dismissed.

Réné understood the situation in an instant, and, having quickly made up his mind as to the part he would play in the little drama, bowed profusely, and made as if to depart.

"Monsieur, did you not hear it?"

"Certainly, madame; it was a pistol shot."

"Then, there are thieves in the neighbourhood?"

"It is very probable, and now that I think of it, I remember observing a little while ago, a villainous-looking fellow prowling about."

"I heard no cry—"

"Perhaps the shot missed."

"Are you not running a risk by going out now?"

"No doubt, madame. But I do not see what else I can do. You have shown me clearly that my presence here is inopportune, and I do not wish to intrude."

"Really, monsieur, I am anxious on your account, and, to be frank, on my own also. My maid has not yet returned, and if I were not afraid of troubling you I would ask you to wait until she comes in."

Réné blessed his lucky stars and replied respectfully: "I am happy to do you so small a service."

The hall was lighted brightly, and they seated themselves in the big chairs. There was a moment's awkward pause, and then M. de la Brière mentioned his name and the Countess followed his example, which put them at their ease.

A literary man of great talent and merited reputation, a thorough man of the world, Réné was able to judge Countess Laispare at her true value, and the esteem he felt for her character as he knew it must be, was added to the profound admiration her beauty awakened in him. Graceful and pretty, she combined perfect regularity of feature with a mobility of expression, and in her clear eyes the depth of her nature revealed itself.

Learning that she was a widow, Réné ventured to ask her if, young and pretty as she was, she had never thought of marrying again. She responded with sudden sadness that her marriage had not made her happy; that her husband had not treated her with great kindness. Her illusions had been so utterly destroyed that she felt certain the only chance of happiness lay in keeping her liberty, full and entire.

Réné, under the spell of sudden enthusiasm, began to plead with ardour in a cause which he almost felt to be his own.

He tried to convince her how unjust she was in thus condemning beforehand any true love which might be offered to her, because her first choice had fallen upon a man incapable of appreciating his happiness and proving himself worthy of it.

He grew eloquent, animated, persuasive, and ended his pleading, so full of warmth, by saying:

"There exists an old Persian legend which places him who finds a woman's slipper for ever under the influence of its owner. I ask nothing better than to be allowed to fulfil the prophetic legend and remain all my life in the spell of the dainty slipper I found to-night."

And did the Countess allow herself to be convinced? Love and confidence work miracles. It is certain that when Mariette returned she was not scolded and her excuses were accepted in full. And later it was rumoured that the château near Compeigne had obtained a master.

AGNES CRAWFORD.

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MULTIPLICATION MADE EASY. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By H. VANE STOW, F.S.S., and H. T. EMERY. In this article there is explained, by means of some excellent photographs, an ingenious and entirely novel method of multiplication. So simple is it, that the product of two large numbers, such as 19 and 17, can be easily found by the most hopeless duffer at arithmetic, and the wonder is that this system of multiplication has never been thought of before.

THE LAST OF THE BORGIAS. No. 1.—The Scrip of Death. (Illustrated by D. Murray Smith.) By FRED M. WHITE. This is the first of a series of poison stories. The interest in this remarkable series will be chiefly centred in the experiments of one Victor Colonna, Professor of Science, who has acquired a mysterious knowledge of the lost arts of poisoning.

SNAKE-CHARMING. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By MARK LANE. Here are reproduced some extraordinary photographs of venomous snakes, curled peacefully round the neck, arms and legs of the most noted snake-charmer in the world, and even fondled by his little daughter. Such power over a snake would never have been thought possible were it not that the actual photographs, specially taken for this article, are reproduced.

AT THE SIGN OF THE "GOLDEN STAR." (Illustrated by E. F. Sherie.) By GEORGE GRIFFITH. This is an ingenious story of the illicit diamond traffic in South Africa, by Mr. George Griffith, whose stories of the I.D.B., which recently appeared in PEARSON'S MAGAZINE, were so deservedly popular.

NATURE'S PRACTICAL JOKES. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By R. BERTRAM. This feature embraces a marvellous collection of photographs of Nature's eccentricities, potatoes in human form, carrots like animals, natural wooden flowers, and many other strange and weird natural phenomena.

WOMEN WARRIORS. (Illustrated by H. Piffard.) By MARCUS TINDAL. Here you will find recorded the daring deeds of some of the bravest women of history, women who have courageously followed their husbands into the battle-field, and others who have clothed themselves in men's attire, and fought for their country with honour and bravery.

THE FINGER OF GOD. (Illustrated by J. A. Symington.) By WILLIAM BEATTY. This story is full of dramatic interest to the very last paragraph.

THE LAY FIGURE. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By AUSTIN FRYERS. This article, describing the many uses to which lay figures are put, by artists and others, is illustrated with the most amusing photographs of these human models taken in all sorts of grotesque attitudes.

A MAD GENIUS. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By ANNESLEY KENEALY. Confined in an asylum on the outskirts of London is one of the cleverest workmen who has ever lived. By special permission, our representative has been allowed to interview him and photograph some of his most wonderful mechanical triumphs. The interview and illustrations reproduced in this issue of the MAGAZINE together form a feature of extraordinary interest.

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE. No. XIII.—In Quarantine. (Illustrated by Stanley L. Wood.) By CUTCLIFFE HYNE. In this powerful story is narrated one of Captain Kettle's most characteristic adventures. No one should miss this, the first of a new series of stories of the plucky little Captain, who is certainly the most popular character in fiction at the present moment.

LIFE'S LITTLE WORRIES. (Illustrated by Henry Mayer.) By W. L. ALDEN. Shoes, cyclometers and toys are amongst the worries of life which Mr Alden so lightly and so deftly criticises in his most amusing *causerie*.

Ronald Beeton's Experience.

"I saw your wife this afternoon, Beeton—what a very pretty little creature she is—with Frank Audley."

"With Frank Audley?" echoed Beeton.

"And, look you," added his companion, in a lower tone of voice, "if that beautiful young girl were my wife, I shouldn't care about her going out so much with Frank Audley, though he is a second cousin. You know he's a reckless, devil-may-care sort of fellow, and people are beginning to talk."

"Are they?" Beeton's brow had grown black, and he bit his lip to keep back some strong, stormy emotion.

"You'll not be offended at my speaking so plainly, will you, Beeton? People will gossip, you know."

"Oh, no—I'm very much obliged to you for mentioning the matter. I'll take care they shall not gossip on the subject any longer."

His wife was sitting in her exquisitely appointed little drawing-room, turning the leaves of some new music, and humming the airs softly to herself in such a deliciously modulated voice that the very canaries in the window put their tiny golden heads on one side to listen.

She was a slender, delicately framed girl, with violet-grey eyes, and brown hair with auburn gleams dancing through its abundant folds; and as she sat there on a low velvet ottoman, in a dress of white muslin, with crimson roses in her bosom, she looked not unlike the fair creation of an artist's pencil.

"Ronald!" she exclaimed, glancing brightly up as her husband came into the room. "Surely you are home from the office earlier than usual to-night?"

"Earlier than you expected to see me, I suppose," he said, in strange, stifled accents, and then paused suddenly to pick something up from the carpet. "Whose glove is this?"

"Glove!" repeated Dora, leaning forward to take it from his hand. "Oh, it is Mr. Audley's! I suppose he has dropped it by mistake."

Beeton's cheek flushed purple; he set his teeth closely together. All the stormy impulses of his jealous, passionate nature seemed warring together in his breast.

"He has then honoured my poor house by his presence this afternoon," he said mockingly.

Dora looked up with wondering eyes.

"He came home from the matinée with me, about half an hour ago. See—here is some of that enchanting opera music he has just sent me."

Beeton snatched the scattered sheets from his wife's lap, tore them passionately into a score of pieces, and throwing them on the carpet, ground them under his heel.

"Ronald!" exclaimed Dora, shrinking back, while her face blanched with a nameless foreboding.

"That is the way I shall serve your very particular friend, Mr. Audley, the next time he shows his dastardly face within my door," hissed Beeton. "Beware, madam! This sort of thing has gone on quite long enough! I am not quite blind and deaf, although you seem to fancy I am!

"Now look here," he added, grasping her slender wrist until the bracelet cut into the flesh, "I may as well warn you first as last, that this unprincipled coquetry must come to an end!"

"Coquetry!" repeated Dora, with cheeks aflame, and eyes flashing with resentful sparkles. "Mr. Beeton, how dare you use that word to me—to your wife?"

He broke into such a torrent of angry invective and fierce vituperation that she shrank away like a hunted fawn, scarce believing that the man before her could be the husband whose love she had so blindly trusted.

"Ronald! spare me! Don't, for mercy's sake, speak to me so!"

He flung her hand away with a quick, passionate movement, and, hurling one last bitter sentence from his lips, strode from the room.

A moment afterwards she heard the hall door bang furiously.

* * * * *

The clock in some far-off church spire was striking eleven when Ronald Beeton slowly ascended the softly carpeted flight of stairs that led up to his drawing-room, and opened the door.

"I'm afraid I was too hard on Dora to-day," he thought. "I wish I hadn't said quite so much. The fact is, I've got such a wretched temper that it leads me into all sorts of scrapes. I must try to curb it a little more. Poor little dove—how frightened she was!"

As the door swung open, nothing but a dark, empty void struck his eye. All was shrouded in gloom, save one spot athwart the wall, where a faint glimmer of

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reflected light from the gas-lamp in the street below seemed to tremble through the surrounding obscurity.

"Dora! Dorie! Where are you?"

There was no reply.

"Pooh!" he ejaculated, trying to laugh off the chill feeling of apprehension which seemed to paralyze his nerves, "of course she's gone up to her own room to have a cry—that's what women always do when anything goes wrong."

And he sprang up the second flight, two steps at a time.

"Hallo!" he muttered, "this is strange—no lights here!"

He struck a match, and the next instant a brilliant stream of gas-light illumined the room.

But it was silent and empty. One of the drawers was left half open, with various articles of feminine apparel scattered about as if someone had searched through the drawers in blind haste.

Mr. Beeton jerked the bell-rope, his brain full of vague, undefined dread. Dora's maid answered the summons from an adjoining room—a sleepy damsel with her hair already twisted in curl-papers.

"Where is your mistress, Jennings?"

"Gone, sir. Didn't you know it?"

"Gone where?"

"I don't know, sir. I thought p'raps you'd sent for her, sir."

"When did she go?"

"Well, sir, 'twasn't long after you'd gone out this evening. I was going upstairs to get the laces and fine handkechers to do up, when I met her coming downstairs with her hat and things on. Her face was as white as a sheet, and she r n past me like a spirit! I dec'are, sir," went on the voluble Jennings. "It gave me such a turn I haven't got over it yet. I went to the parlour window, and saw her get into a carriage that was waitin' there, and then it drove away, and—Dear me, sir, are you ill?"

For Ronald Beeton had staggered back against the wall, pale as death, with a cold dew breaking out upon his lips.

"Did she leave no note—no message?"

"No, sir, I looked through the whole room. Do let me get you a glass of wine, sir."

Mr. Beeton shook his head, and motioned the girl to leave him; it seemed an imperative necessity that he should be alone to grapple with this terrible adversity that had come so suddenly upon him.

Gone!—fled away from him—the fair, gentle thing who had so leant on his love, and confided in his watchful care! Driven away by the storm of his ungoverned passion! It seemed too dreadful, too incredible to believe.

While he sat there, incapable as yet of forming any definite plan of action, a tap sounded softly at his door.

"I hope you'll excuse me, sir," said Jennings. "I told him you were engaged most particular, but he would come up."

"It's only I, Beeton," said Bewlay. "I'm in a desperate hurry to see Audley, and he isn't at his rooms, nor anywhere to be found, in fact. I thought perhaps he might be here this evening."

"I don't know," said Beeton, looking up with haggard face and bloodshot eyes. "I can't tell—I haven't seen him."

His head fell again upon his hands as the door closed behind Bewlay—his great grief seemed to close once more about him, weighing him, as it were, to the very ground.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet with a cry of passionate despair trembling on his lips:

"Audley gone! Dora gone! By all the furies, they have gone together!"

He was in the street, the cool night wind blowing the hair away from his heated brow, before the fancy had shaped itself into words—in the streets, blindly darting towards the Mansions where Frank Audley resided, heedless of everything.

"Mr. Audley—is he in?" he gasped of the hall-porter.

"Mr. Audley, sir. No, sir."

"Where is he? Quick! tell me!"

The man recoiled from Beeton's iron grasp upon his arm, beginning to fear that his interlocutor was not altogether sane.

"I don't know, sir; he didn't leave word."

Beeton leant against one of the walls and wiped the clammy perspiration from his forehead.

"Do you know where he has gone?"

"No, sir."

An agonised groan broke from Beeton's white lips as he turned away. No trace, no tidings of them.

Thus passed over his stricken head the first bitter night of loneliness and tribulation.

As he went slowly down the street the next morning, revolving in his mind the best method of instituting inquiries and obtaining some clue of the missing couple, he stumbled against someone coming in the opposite direction.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said mechanically, and then as he looked up:

"Frank Audley!" broke from his lips.

"Why, you couldn't be more astonished to see me if I were risen from the dead!" laughed Audley, with the most perfect self-possession.

"My wife—Dora!" gasped Beeton.

"What's the matter? Is she ill?"

"No—that is—where is she?"

"I could not say, really," returned Audley, shrugging his shoulders. "I have not seen her since I escorted her home from the opera matinée, yesterday afternoon."

Beeton stared with a bewildered face at his companion.

"Tell me, where were you last night?"

"Last night? let me see. I dined with Lincoln, and we kept it up until after midnight. Then I went peaceably home to my rooms, and slept the sleep of the righteous!"

"Audley," said Beeton, in hurried, broken accents, "I have wronged you—I am sorry for it."

"Have you?" returned Audley good-humouredly. "I wasn't aware of it, but you have my pardon, all the same."

He was apparently about to question Beeton still further, but the latter gentleman had turned back, and was hurrying in an opposite direction once more.

"Poor fellow," soliloquized Frank. "I hope he isn't cracked; but it looks uncomfortably like it!"

Meanwhile Beeton was striding homeward, relieved, yet wretched still.

"She is as innocent as the daylight," he muttered. "I might have known that—my little girlish Dora—my soft-eyed bird! Yet all this makes my own folly plainer! I have lost her, and it has been through my own mad passion!"

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He went up to the desolate room where Dora's soft voice had made music so short a time ago, for he would fain have a moment or so of uninterrupted solitude to consider what steps it were best to decide upon next.

The morning sun was streaming on the odd patterns of the Persian carpet—the birds were singing shrilly in the windows, and a slight, delicate figure was standing in the middle of the room untying her bonnet-strings.

"Dora!"

"Did you think you had lost me, Ronald?" she said, smiling. "But it was very thoughtless of me to leave no word or note for you, dearest."

"My darling! my recovered treasure!" he stammered, holding her close to his heart, as if he feared that even then she would vanish into thin air. "You have forgiven my cruel words? You will forget their bitter sting?"

"I knew you could never have meant them, Ronald," she said fondly. "Then you were really frightened about your little runaway?"

"I cannot tell you how much the mere idea of losing you terrified me, darling," he said fervently. "But how did it happen? where have you been—why——"

One question at a time, sir," said Dora, laughingly holding up her finger to stem the torrent of inquiries. "I have had a fright, too, although not quite so baseless as yours."

"A fright, Dora?"

"Hush, sir, and let me tell my own story. You had hardly left the house last night when a telegram arrived, containing the briefly worded message that my mother was dying. I looked at my watch. It wanted just fifteen minutes from the starting time of the express train. I stopped a cab that was passing empty down the street, threw a few necessaries into my travelling bag, and just succeeded in catching the train."

"Well?"

"When I reached home I discovered that my mother had only been suffering from a sudden fit—that she was already nearly recovered, and you can easily imagine what a relief it was. So of course I took the earliest morning train back, and here I am."

She put up her pretty mouth to kiss him, as she spoke, with a childlike caress.

"And I fancied that my brutal words had driven you from me for ever!"

"You forget that I am your wife," she said with gentle dignity.

"My wife, whom I have at last learnt to prize as she deserves," he whispered tenderly.

"I shall never scold you again! Frank Audley may come here as often as he likes now."

"And you will promise to have no more spasms of jealousy?"

"I will promise never, never to doubt you again! The last twenty-four hours have taught me a lesson that I shall not soon forget!" Arthur Vivian.

FINDINGS ARE KEEPINGS.

Talking of finding photographs: did you fellows ever hear about Kitson's romance? It happened in our freshman year.

I went over to his rooms that first evening after he was settled, and found him sitting in his big armchair before the fire. He jumped up quickly when I came in, and laid something slyly on the mantelpiece. It looked like a photograph, and I began to chaff him about being home-sick so soon, and asked if he were looking at mother's picture.

He flushed up quickly, and said it was nothing to be ashamed of if it had been his mother's picture, but that as it happened it was no such thing. Then he changed the subject and asked how I liked the room.

He was especially proud of his desk, which he had bought of the man who had occupied the rooms last.

"Thorne gave me the key himself, with his blessing, to-day," he said, "and when I asked if 'findings were keepings' he laughed and said I was welcome to whatever I found in the old ark, for he was pretty sure there was nothing in it."

"But you did find something after all?" I asked quickly, for though he is a good lawyer now, he never could keep a secret in those days.

"Oh, well, not much," he said carelessly; but I saw him glance toward the mantelpiece. I guessed in a minute what it was, and before he could stop me I sprang for the photograph at which he had been looking when I entered.

He jumped up angrily. "Give me that photograph!"

"Oh, ho! So it's a girl, is it? And a mighty pretty one, too. And her name is on the back—Rose Thorne."

Kitson had the picture by this time, and after putting it away in the desk turned upon me indignantly, and I dodged a Greek lexicon and cleared out.

It was one evening in early summer when one of the fellows—Goodrich—came running into my room out of breath with laughing, and threw himself into my chair.

"Oh, it's a rich joke about Kitson," he gasped at last; "it's the photograph he always carries about with him—'Rose Thorne'—oh, dear!" And he exploded again. "That picture—it's Thorne's own photo, taken last year in the theatricals. Here's a duplicate of it. I found it in Les'er's room to-day."

And he pulled out of his pocket another likeness of the fair Rose Thorne

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The joke was too good to keep. The idea of dignified old Kitson being in love with another fellow—a shaven and bewigged "Rose" blossoming on the Thorne tree!

"And he carried that thing in his waistcoat pocket next his heart!" roared Goodrich.

Then we concocted a fine scheme and waited for a chance to carry it out. At last the opportunity came.

We arranged one night for our meeting, and all the boys promised to be there. Well, that evening Harry was in his best mood. He had just finished his last examination and was feeling in good spirits at his prospects. He did the honours in grand style, and showed no signs of caring for any girl, let alone the photograph whose original he had never seen.

The boys began the game before long. Goodrich was the one to start it.

"I say, fellows," he called across the room, "don't you remember little Thorne? Yes, you do, at Adams' spread a year ago—little Rose in the red dress."

"Oh, yes," said another fellow, with a grin; "you mean the girl who took too much champagne——"

"And couldn't walk to the carriage," chimed in Eddy with his hoarse laugh. "I remember that, fellows; I carried her."

"She was more than a handful for Thorne, that little sister of his," said another.

And so they went on with their jokes about "Rosie," as they called her, each growing more personal in his hits, which were received with roars of laughter and assenting grins of delight.

Kitson was all the time sitting glum and quiet by the window, with his head bent in his hands, pulling fiercely at his pipe without a word.

Then Goodrich said suddenly:

"I say, fellows, how many of you have her picture? She only gives 'em to the ones she loves best. I got mine the night I took her to Marlow's for a little dinner after the theatre. How's that, Kitson? Is that the way you got yours?"

Harry jumped up quickly and stood facing Goodrich defiantly, with his eyes flashing.

"Oh, you've got it there, we know," went on Goodrich, tapping his breast pocket. "I've seen it; isn't it like this?"

And he pulled the duplicate out of his own pocket triumphantly.

But Goodrich overdid the thing—he always did. He was a coarse brute. He made some other remarks which were quite unnecessary for the purposes of our joke, and which we were all of us ashamed to hear, and then he stepped forward as if to grab the photograph out of Harry's pocket.

But Kitson was thoroughly waked up now. With a gesture he flung away his pipe and then, planting his big fist squarely between Goodrich's eyes, sent him tumbling back with a crash against the door.

"It's a lie; it's all a—lie," he said steadily and in a low tone. "She is Jack Thorne's sister, and I know she is a fine girl. I'm not ashamed to wear her photograph, but I won't take it out for you fellows to see. If any of the rest of you dare to say that Goodrich spoke the truth, let him step out and say it, and then I'll knock him down."

Just then there was a knock on the door, and in walked Mr. White, the proctor. He stood holding the door-knob in one hand and looking first at the crowd of us, then straight at Harry, who was still standing with his fists clenched, glaring down at Goodrich on the floor.

Of course, he wanted an explanation, and Kitson told him that Goodrich had insulted a lady, and showed the photograph. Mr. White looked at it; and then ordered Goodrich to go out and told Harry he did quite right. And not one of us tried to explain the joke, so we cut rather a poor figure.

Then turning to Harry again, he said pleasantly, as if nothing had happened:

"Mr. Kitson, there are a lady and gentleman waiting outside who would like to look at this room, if you are prepared to receive visitors now."

We all stood mute and awkward while the proctor, after receiving a puzzled, but gracious assent from Harry, turned and spoke to someone outside the door.

"Mr. Kitson," he said, re-entering, followed by the two strangers. "I think you have met Mr. Thorne before. He wished his sister to see his old college room. It is the first time she has ever been to the college. I assure you, Miss Thorne, it is not usually so noisy here. The boys were having a little fro ic to-night."

One by one we slunk silently out of the room, fixing our dazed eyes to the last upon the feminine counterpart of the unlucky photograph—a sweeter, far lovelier version of the handsome brother, by whose side she stood chatting graciously with Harry and looking coldly at us from under half-disdainful eyelids.

We all wondered, and wonder still, how much of that row she ever heard.

She had been studying abroad for the last three years, and now that she was home she wanted to see his old room, and had stumbled upon our joke.

No, it didn't get about the college. I don't know whether Harry himself ever quite understood it. You see, we naturally did not care to have it noised about much, for even Goodrich agreed that the joke wasn't exactly on Kitson.

Oh, yes, her name really was Rose. Thorne had written it on the photo because its resemblance to her was so perfect.

What's that? Of course he did. Harry always got whatever he tried for, in college and out! M. King.

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CONSULTATIONS FREE.

FARO says:—"I am sorry 'The Empress of the Earth' is finished. Are you going to let us have another war story soon? I hope so. Why not republish 'The Final War?' Many of us who read *Short Stories* did not read it in *Pearson's Weekly*."————I don't know, Faro, really, I don't know. To be candid I thought of letting war stories have a rest; then I get your letter and others of a similar kind. Suppose you and my other readers decide for me. Will you all send in a post-card saying whether you want a war story or not, and how many of you want "The Final War."

F. V. W.—Statistics prove that the most common cause of fires is the throwing down of lighted matches and other lights. The upsetting of lamps comes next. There are more fires in London during December than any other month.

I. N.—Justices of the Peace are appointed by the Lord Chancellor on the recommendation of the lord lieutenant of the county.

LOBSTER wants to know what it is that makes a negro's skin black?———The existence of a carbon pigment underlying the epidermis of the skin.

J. writes: "I am surprised to read that flints for guns are still made in this country. Do you know where they are produced?"————Gun flints are produced in the Lingheath Mines in Suffolk, and the output last year was 1,820,000. These flints are chiefly for guns intended for African and other savages, who, having been accustomed to flint locks for a long time, do not take kindly to more improved weapons. There are four sizes of flints now in use, and they are known as the musket, the carbine, the horse, and the single.

HAWK.—The entire coast line of the globe is about 136,000 miles.

D. S.—The electric light was invented in 1846, but it was not thought much of or made much use of before the year 1876.

C. P. H. asks: "Are the pigeons which frequent the various public buildings in London private property?"———Strictly speaking they belong to no one, although custom has enabled the officials attached to public buildings to lay claim to those birds which roost on their premises. It is believed that they were originally "strays" from private owners.

M. M. D.—A man's full mental power is not attained until the age of twenty-five. As a rule, the development of talent is most marked between the ages of thirty and forty-five.

A. P. T.—Moscow seems to hold the record for the largest hospital. It has one with accommodation for 7,000 persons and employs 900 nurses.

U. K. writes: "Is it really a fact that the late King of Spain is still unburied?"————Quite true. His body lies covered with a winding sheet on a marble slab in a vault of the Escurial. This is in accordance with a custom, dating from the year 700, for the body of a dead King to remain unburied until the death of his successor, when he is placed with great pomp beside the remains of his predecessors in the chapel of the Escurial.

BEN.—There are 169 Scotch mountains which have the prefix "Ben."

COAL.—The Home Office Return for last year will show you how we are using up our coal supply in the United Kingdom. 202,119,196 tons was the respectable quantity mined in 1897, which was an increase of 7,000,000 tons on the output for 1896.

R. M. writes to point out that man is the only animal that has a real nose or chin.————This is quite true, when you come to think about it. For horses have faces that are all noses, swine have snouts, elephants trunks, birds have beaks, lions have vast smelling organs, but none of them can be separated from their faces and called a nose. This fact is even more true of the chin, for it is particularly human.

CONSUL.—In the early days of Rome ladies wore such heavy ear-rings that they sometimes tore the lobes. Injuries to the ear were so numerous, that many doctors occupied themselves almost entirely with the healing of such injuries. The old idea that the wearing of ear-rings improves the sight, is nearly dead.

UNCLE.—The term "uncle," as applied to a pawnbroker, is a pun on the Latin word *uncus*, a hook. Pawnbrokers formerly employed a hook to lift the pawned articles, and the phrase was originally "Gone to the uncus." In the seventeenth century a usurer was called "my uncle" in the Walloon provinces, because, of his near connection with spendthrifts, which in Latin are *nepotes*, nephews.

M. R. A.—No, the Queen has never made use of the Royal Barges. They are in the care of Mr. Messenger of Teddington in his capacity of Queen's Bargemaster. These vessels are divided longitudinally by a gangway, the oarsmen sitting two on a seat on either side, as in the ancient Greek and Roman galleys.

HAIR.—A single dark-brown female hair will bear a weight of four ounces; a blonde hair will break under a strain of two and a half ounces.

G. T.—The cost of the celebrated Palace at Versailles is not known. It is said that Louis XIV. threw into the fire all the documents relating to the cost, so that the people should not hear of the vast sums he had spent on it.

VIOLET—The chrysantheum is the national flower of Japan. Once a year, when the chrysanthemum is in full flower, royalty gives a *fête* in its honour, invitations being only extended to those of high rank.

M. T.—Pembroke was a county palatine but was deprived of the title in 1535.

Q. R.—What are commonly called cats' whiskers are in reality feelers, which enable the animal in its wild state to find, or rather feel, its way through woods and forests in its nocturnal expeditions in search of prey. It is quite wrong to suppose they have anything to do with the sense of smell; they bear no relation whatever to the nasal organ.

B. B. B.—Photographs were first taken in England in 1802.

Notice to Competitors.

IN all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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